



Title Washback effects of speaking assessment of
teaching English in Sri Lankan schools

Name Singanayagam Umashankar

This is a digitised version of a dissertation submitted to the University of Bedfordshire.

It is available to view only.

This item is subject to copyright.

**WASHBACK EFFECTS OF SPEAKING ASSESSMENT OF
TEACHING ENGLISH IN SRI LANKAN SCHOOLS**

SINGANAYAGAM UMASHANKAR

**A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire, in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

August 2017

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE

DECLARATION

I, Singanayagam Umashankar declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research: Washback effects of speaking assessment of teaching English in Sri Lankan schools.

I confirm that this work was done wholly in candidature for a research degree at the University of Bedfordshire. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Name of candidate: Singanayagam Umashankar

Signature:



Date: August 2017

ABSTRACT

Washback Effects of Speaking Assessment of Teaching English in Sri Lankan Schools

Washback is a concept commonly used in applied linguistics to refer to the influence of testing on teaching and learning. The purpose of this study was to investigate the washback effect of a new system of English language speaking assessment in Sri Lanka. The new assessment was introduced with the intention of promoting the teaching and learning of English speaking skills in schools as part of a Presidential educational initiative called the English as a Life Skill Programme.

The study examined the washback effect of the introduction of speaking assessments at both National and school levels from the perspectives of participants at three levels of the education system: the decision making level, intervening level (teacher trainers and in-service advisors), and implementing level (teachers and students). For this purpose, a mixed methods research approach was employed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants at the decision making level and intervening level to examine whether there were any important gaps in translating policy intentions to the implementing level participants (teachers and students). A questionnaire survey was conducted with teachers and students to investigate their perceptions of the assessment change and its effects on teaching and learning speaking in the classroom.

Classroom observations were conducted to gain insights into actual classroom practices in relation to teaching and learning speaking, along with follow-up interviews to seek teachers' accounts of their classroom practices.

The study found that the assessment change did influence teachers' and students' perceptions of teaching and learning speaking in the classroom, as well as teachers' instructional practices. Therefore, some of the policymakers' intended aims were achieved. However, the intensity and direction of washback were shown to be influenced by several mediating factors such as teachers' training and contextual factors such as the availability of classroom resources.

The findings of this study suggest that assessment reforms can be used to promote change both in *what* is taught in the classroom and *how* it is taught, but to different degrees. The study indicated that washback does occur in this context, but it operates in a complex manner associated with many other variables besides the assessment itself.

The findings of this study have implications for the improvement of future assessment policies in Sri Lanka, highlighting the importance of timely implementation of reforms and of monitoring them. The findings suggest that it is especially important to listen to key stakeholders' (teachers' and students') voices in the initial planning and feasibility study phases of reform.

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this work in memory of my late father MR. SAPAPATHY SINGANAYAGAM, who had been an inspiration in my English learning.

I also dedicate this work to my friend MR. KATHIRKAMATHAMBY THURAIRAYASINGAM, who sincerely and wholeheartedly looked after me after the serious accident in 1985.

I also dedicate this work to MR. VELLUPILLAI THIRUNAVUKARASU and his family members for their unconditional moral support during the last stages of writing up this report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This doctoral thesis would not have been possible without the immense support of my Director of Studies Professor Tony Green, you have been a tremendous mentor for me. I am extremely thankful and indebted to you for sharing expertise, and the sincere and valuable guidance and encouragement extended to me and for allowing me to grow as a researcher. Your guidance and advice on my research have been priceless. Thank you Sir.

Sincere gratitude and appreciation is due to Dr. Ming Kei Lam for serving as my Co-Supervisor even at hardship. I want to thank you for your readiness and patience in helping me, and for your brilliant comments and suggestions. Thanks to your insights which greatly assisted me in writing my thesis, thanks to you Sir.

I also wish to thank Dr. Lynda Taylor; you initially guided me with your valuable thoughts in this research study.

I would especially like to thank the staff members at the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA), University of Bedfordshire, and I also like to thank staff members in the library at Bedford and Luton campus. All of you have been there to support me in my search for literature for my PhD thesis.

I would like to acknowledge the financial support provided by the HETC Project and NCAS, Colombo which was of great help in my study.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to all research participants in Sri Lanka.

Last but not least, a special thanks to my mother, brothers and sisters, and my beloved kids Pooja Tharthsarani and Yadushanen for all of the sacrifices that you have made on my behalf.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	xiv
List of Figures	xvi
Abbreviations	xvii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 English Language Education in Sri Lanka	1
1.3 The history of educational reform in Sri Lanka	4
1.4 Previous attempts to reform Sri Lankan English Language education	6
1.5 Introduction of the New System of Assessment under ELSP	9
1.6 Purpose of the study	14
1.7 The researcher's position and personal motivation for undertaking this research	16
1.8 Outline of the Thesis	17
Chapter 2 Literature Review	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Washback: Definition	20
2.2.1 Definitions of effects of testing	20
2.3 Complexity of washback	22
2.3.1 Aspects of teaching and learning affected by washback	23

2.3.2 Characteristics of washback	24
2.3.2.1 Washback intentionality	24
2.3.2.2 Value of washback: Positive, Negative	26
2.3.2.3 Washback specificity	30
2.3.2.4 Washback intensity	31
2.3.2.5 Differential washback	32
2.3.2.6 Seasonality and persistence (length) of washback	33
2.4 Factors mediating the process of washback	34
2.4.1 Teacher-related factors	37
2.4.1.1 Teachers' perceptions and attitudes	39
2.4.1.2 Teaching experience	40
2.4.1.3 Teachers' education, teacher training, and awareness of assessment change	41
2.4.2 Student related factors	42
2.4.2.1 Students' perceptions and attitudes	42
2.4.3 School and classroom factors	44
2.4.4 Assessment related factors	46
2.4.4.1 Design and administration of assessment	46
2.4.5 Macro-context related factors	46
2.4.5.1 Resources	47
2.5 Washback: hypotheses and mechanisms	48
2.5.1 Washback hypotheses	49
2.5.2 Washback models	51
2.5.3 Conceptual framework for the study	54
2.6 Investigating washback	56
2.7 Washback in the Sri Lankan context	59
2.7.1 Purpose of the study	60
2.7.2 Research design	60

2.7.3 Research methods	62
2.7.4 Theoretical framework	63
2.7.5 Findings	64
2.7.6 Recommendations and guidelines	67
2.7.7 Contributions and limitations of Wall's study	69
2.7.7.1 Contributions	69
2.7.7.2 Research gaps	71
2.7.8 Summary of Wall's study	74
2.7.9 Implications of Wall's study	75
2.8 Summary of the Chapter and a Framework for the study	76
Chapter 3 Methodology	80
3.1 Introduction	80
3.2 Research questions	81
3.2.1 Research Question One: Intervening level	81
3.2.2 Research Question Two: Implementing level	82
3.2.3 Research Question Three: Implementing level	84
3.3 Research design	85
3.3.1 Preliminary investigation (Exploratory approach)	86
3.3.2 Research methodology adopted	87
3.3.3 Mixed methods research approach	88
3.3.4 Variables focused on in the study	90
3.4 Research sampling	92
3.4.1 Sampling of participants	95
3.4.1.1 Decision making level participants	96
3.4.1.2 Intervening level participants	97
3.4.1.3 Implementing level participants	99
3.4.2 Sampling of Schools	101
3.4.2.1 Selection of schools by school type	103

3.4.3 Sampling of teaching and learning materials	106
3.5 Data collection instruments	108
3.5.1 Purpose of each research instrument	108
3.6 Semi-structured interview with intervening level participants	111
3.6.1 Introduction	111
3.6.2 Purpose of interview	111
3.6.3 The interview procedure	112
3.6.4 Analysis of interview data	114
3.7 Survey method	115
3.7.1 Introduction	115
3.7.2 Development of the initial questionnaire	116
3.7.3 Pilot study stage of questionnaire survey	117
3.7.3.1 Pilot teacher questionnaire survey	117
3.7.3.2 Pilot student questionnaire survey	119
3.7.4 Changes made to survey questionnaires after piloting	120
3.7.4.1 Changes made in the teacher questionnaire	121
3.7.4.2 Changes made in the student questionnaire	121
3.7.5 Main study stage	122
3.7.5.1 Teacher questionnaire for main study	122
3.7.5.2 Student questionnaire for main study	125
3.7.6 Main study data collection procedure for teacher and student Questionnaire	126
3.7.6.1 Analysis of the questionnaire data	129
3.8 Classroom Observation	129
3.8.1 Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) Scheme	131
3.8.2 Pilot study stage of classroom observation	131

3.8.2.1 Changes made to the classroom observation instrument after piloting	133
3.8.3 Classroom observation instrument for main study	135
3.8.4 Sampling for classroom observation	140
3.8.4.1 Teacher participants for classroom observation	141
3.8.5 Main study data collection procedure for classroom observation	142
3.8.6 Method of recording classroom observation	144
3.8.7 Follow-up interviews	144
3.8.8 Analysis of observation data	145
3.8.8.1 Calculations for exclusive focus on instruction units	147
3.8.8.2 Calculations for primary focus on instruction units	147
3.8.8.3 Calculations for combination of focus on instruction units	149
3.8.9 Summarising the observation data	149
3.8.10 Analysis of follow-up interview data	151
3.9 Ethical issues	151
3.10 Triangulation	152
3.11 Summary	154
Chapter 4 Results and Discussion – Interviews	155
4.1 Interview with intervening level participants	155
4.2 Intentions of the change	157
4.3 Preparations for the implementation of the assessment change	158
4.4 Changes in teachers' attitudes and classroom practices	160
4.4.1 Teaching and learning	160
4.4.2 Use of speaking activities in the English Pupil's Books and English Workbook	162
4.4.3 Approaches to teach speaking	163
4.4.4 Approaches to assessment of speaking	166
4.5 Responsibilities	167

4.6 NTS and SBA	170
4.7 Postponement of the NTS	171
4.8 Uncertainty about the weighting of the SBA	173
4.9 Summary of interview findings in relation to RQ1	174
Chapter 5 Results and Discussion –Teacher Questionnaire and Student Questionnaire	176
5.1 Teacher Questionnaire	176
5.2 Demographic information about the teacher respondents	177
5.3 Teachers’ perceptions of the assessment change (Question 6 to 18)	180
5.3.1 Teachers’ degree of approval of the developments within the ELSP	180
5.3.2 Teachers perceptions of the changes to teaching and learning speaking activities	185
5.3.3 Teachers’ perceptions of the “80hr Teacher Training on Speaking Skills”	189
5.3.4 English as a Life Skill Programme on the National Rupavahini Television	191
5.3.5 Speaking activities covered in the Pupil’s textbook and workbook	192
5.3.6 Factors influencing the choice of speaking activities	195
5.3.7 Teachers’ satisfaction with support available for implementing the change	198
5.3.8 Factors influencing the focus of teaching and learning	199
5.3.9 Factors influencing the content of lessons	201
5.3.10 Factors influencing methods of teaching	203
5.3.11 Factors influencing time spent on speaking activities	204

5.3.12 Any other changes to teachers' attitude to teaching speaking caused by the NTS	205
5.3.13 Any other changes to teachers' attitude to teaching speaking caused by the SBA	205
5.4 Summary of teacher questionnaire findings in relation to RQ2	207
5.5 Results and discussions – Student questionnaire	210
5.5.1 Language used in the speaking classes	211
5.5.1.1 Language used in the speaking classes in the three types of schools	212
5.5.2 Activities used in the speaking lessons	213
5.5.3 Materials used in the speaking lessons	216
5.5.4 Reasons for learning speaking in the English classes	218
5.5.5 English as a Life Skill Programme on the National TV	220
5.5.6 Competency acquired from watching ELSP	221
5.5.6.1 Importance of speaking competency	223
5.5.7 Focus on learning speaking	224
5.5.8 Speaking test at National level and School level	226
5.5.9 Influence of speaking tests on teachers	227
5.5.10 Usefulness of the NTS and the SBA	228
5.6 Summary of student questionnaire findings in relation to RQ 2	232
Chapter 6 Results and Discussion – Classroom observations and Follow-up interviews	238
6.1 Findings from classroom observations and follow up interviews	238
6.1.1 Student engagement	240
6.1.1.1 Types of activities	246
6.1.2 Language	247
6.1.3 Participant organisation	249
6.1.4 Content	251

6.1.5 Student modality	253
6.2 Follow-up interviews	255
6.2.1 Objectives of speaking lessons	255
6.2.2 Content and method of teaching	256
6.3 Overall discussions of findings	259
Chapter 7 Conclusion	265
7.1 Summary of the study	265
7.2 Summary of findings	266
7.3 Contributions and implications	274
7.3.1 Contributions to the washback literature	274
7.3.2 Implications for the Sri Lankan context	280
7.3.2.1 Decision making level	281
7.3.2.2 Intervening level	284
7.3.2.3 Implementing level	285
7.4 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research	286
7.4.1 Limitations of the study	286
7.4.2 Suggestions for future research	289
7.5 Closing remarks	291
References	293
Appendices	305
Appendix 1 Information sheet for interview participants	305
Appendix 2 Consent form for the interview participants	306
Appendix 3 Interview schedule for Assistant Directors of Education (English)	307
Appendix 4 Interview schedule for In-Service Advisors	309
Appendix 5 Interview schedule for Master Trainers	312
Appendix 6 Teacher questionnaire for main study	315
Appendix 7 Student questionnaire for main study	323

Appendix 8 Classroom observation scheme for main study	328
Appendix 9 Lesson plan (visit 3)	330
Appendix 10 Sample dialogue (visit 3)	331
Appendix 11 Observers' note (visit 3)	332
Appendix 12 Classroom observational record (visit 3)	333
Appendix 13 Detailed lesson plan (visit 1)	334
Appendix 14 Observer's note (visit 1)	335
Appendix 15 Classroom observational record (visit 1)	336
Appendix 16 Follow-up interview schedule for main study	338
Appendix 17 An interview transcript of a participant	339
Appendix 18 A teacher questionnaire with response	346
Appendix 19 Some speaking activities from the teaching materials	353

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Trichotomy of backwash model	51
Table 3.1 Research participants at three levels and methods of data collection	95
Table 3.2 Selection of intervening level participants for the study	98
Table 3.3 Selection of teachers and students from one of the four zones	100
Table 3.4 Description of types of government schools in the Batticaloa district	103
Table 3.5 Teaching and learning materials	107
Table 3.6 Data collection instruments	110
Table 3.7 Sampling of teacher and student questionnaire survey for pilot study	119
Table 3.8 Research themes of the teacher questionnaire (Research Question 2)	124

Table 3.9 Research themes of the student questionnaire (Research Question 2)	126
Table 3.10 Sampling of teacher and student questionnaire survey for main study	128
Table 3.11 Main study classroom observation schedule	141
Table 3.12 Calculations for exclusive focus	147
Table 3.13 Calculations for primary focus	148
Table 3.14 Calculations for combination of focus	149
Table 3.15 Summary of analysed classroom observation data	150
Table 5.1 Characteristics of the respondents to the questionnaire survey	178
Table 5.2 Teachers' degree of approval of the developments within the ELSP	181
Table 5.3 Teachers' degree of approval of the developments within the ELSP, by school type	184
Table 5.4 Teachers' perception of the changes to aspects of teaching and learning speaking	185
Table 5.5 Teacher training	190
Table 5.6 ELSP on National Television	191
Table 5.7 Speaking activities discussed during the first and second school term of 2013	193
Table 5.8 Factors influencing the selection of speaking activities	195
Table 5.9 Teachers' satisfaction with support available	198
Table 5.10 Factors influencing the focus on teaching and learning speaking skills	200
Table 5.11 Factors influencing the content of speaking lessons	202
Table 5.12 Factors influencing methods of teaching speaking	203
Table 5.13 Factors influencing time spent on speaking activities	204
Table 5.14 Language used in the speaking classes	211

Table 5.15 Language used in the three types of schools	212
Table 5.16 Activities in the speaking classes	214
Table 5.17 Materials used in the speaking classes	216
Table 5.18 Reasons for learning speaking	218
Table 5.19 The most important reason for learning speaking	219
Table 5.20 ELSP on National Television	221
Table 5.21 Competencies acquired	222
Table 5.22 Importance of speaking competency	223
Table 5.23 NTS vs. SBA	224
Table 5.24 Influence of test on students	225
Table 5.25 Two levels of testing	226
Table 5.26 Influence of testing on teachers	228
Table 5.27 Role of tests in improving speaking ability	229
Table 6.1 Student engagement	240
Table 6.2 Summary of average percentage of time spent on student engagement	245
Table 6.3a Language used in teacher-fronted activities	248
Table 6.3b Language used in active student engagement	248
Table 6.4 Participant organisation	250
Table 6.5 Content categories	252
Table 6.6 Student modality	253

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Factors identified by empirical studies as mediating degree and type of washback	37
Figure 2.2 A basic model of washback	54
Figure 2.3 A proposed model of washback	77
Figure 3.1 Variables focused in the study	92
Figure 3.2 Different approaches to triangulation employed in this study	153

Abbreviations

Assistant Director of Education (English) (ADE)

District English Language Improvement Centre (DELIC)

English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP)

In-Service Advisor (ISA)

Master Trainer (MT)

National Institute of Education (NIE)

National Test of Speaking (NTS)

School Based Assessment (SBA)

Student Questionnaire (SQ)

Teacher Guide (TQ)

Teacher Questionnaire (TQ)

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, I describe the role of English in Sri Lanka and provide a brief history of English Language Education reform in the country, focusing on a number of issues which have hindered the implementation of reform policies. This is followed by a description of the new speaking test under the English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP) and a description of this study, which investigates the influence of a partially implemented assessment change in Sri Lankan schools involving assessment of English speaking at two levels – the school level and the national level. The focus is the effects of assessment change on the curriculum and on aspects of classroom teaching and learning, particularly on teachers' instructional practices.

In this Chapter, I also describe my personal motivation and my position and role of undertaking this research.

This Chapter concludes with a description of the organisation of the thesis.

1.2 English Language Education in Sri Lanka

English is viewed in Sri Lanka as the language of colonial power until her independence in 1945 and of post-colonial élites. It is also seen to be the language of global commerce, associated with economic opportunity. Following independence, English persisted as the medium of education at the secondary level until 1956 (Allen 1993, Gunawardena 2011, Wall 2005). It continues to be identified with privilege as in the colonial past and, because of this, English-

medium education has been resisted by some groups. On the other hand, employers require high levels of English proficiency for the workplace as a key to prosperity.

Currently, most schools in Sri Lanka use either Tamil or Sinhala as the medium of instruction with English being taught as a foreign language. However, English has been promoted by recent governments both as a medium of instruction in specific circumstances such as for science subjects in selected secondary schools and as a second language (Little 2010).

Although English is taught in all Sri Lankan schools, the general standard of spoken English among school children in Sri Lanka has been criticised. It is considered to be a problem once they leave school for finding employment (Karunaretne 2003). Fernando (2010), advisor to the President of Sri Lanka and Coordinator and Convenor of Presidential Task Force on ELSP, points out that children who speak Tamil and Sinhala at home are taught English in school as if it were a dead language like Sanskrit: only learning to read and write and never to speak. This is the crux of the problem. It explains why despite having about 23,000 English teachers in around 9,500 schools and with regular English classes from grade 3 onwards, the average child leaves school without being able to *speak* English (World Bank 2006).

In this regard, Fernando (2010) argues:

... the English curricula followed in schools [in Sri Lanka should] be changed in the direction of job oriented spoken/practical English and away from the grammar and structure based courses that are presently delivered. Still spoken English is not given any importance ... [either] in the school syllabus ... [or] in the examination system. Children are taught in school to read and write English and the public examinations – O level and A level – test a student's reading and writing

skills only. To this day, speaking skills are neither taught nor tested (p.ix).

This (testing only reading and writing skills) might be the reason why speaking skills have not been the focus in classroom teaching and learning activities.

Fernando (2010) suggests that policy makers have three priorities to promote greater speaking ability among Sri Lankan children.

1. Implement changes in the curriculum (a greater emphasis on practical communication).
2. Implement changes in pedagogy (the intention is to foster pedagogical and behavioural changes in teachers by encouraging a more 'student centred' approach with students playing a more active role in classroom interaction).
3. Implement changes in the assessment system (from the culture of paper-pencil testing and report writing to assess the ability to speak the language in real-world situations).

Therefore, a paradigm shift in English language teaching and assessment is needed for the fuller development of the learner, as stated in the goals and objectives of the curriculum in the National Report (Ministry of Education 2004). A new wave of thinking, with the intention of bringing a major change, is advocated for language teaching and learning 'to assess much valued performance related educational outcomes which could not be measured by the paper-pencil tests' (Sedere 2010, p.xiv).

To promote better spoken English, the English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP) was introduced into the Sri Lankan education system in 2011 (Fernando 2010).The

ELSP was intended to focus on testing speaking. The aim was to change the assessment paradigm (from tests involving only the written language to tests that include speaking skills) so that the new system of assessment would encourage more teaching (and hence learning) of spoken English in the classroom (Fernando 2010).

Under the ELSP, for the first time in the history of education in Sri Lanka since its independence in 1945, speaking skills are set to be included as part of the GCE O level examinations administered to students at the end of Grade 11, which is typically taken when children are sixteen years old. Reform of the GCE O level system is thought to be particularly important because this examination is considered high-stakes: it determines whether students are allowed to continue on to GCE A level or whether they leave school to find employment or attend other technical courses provided by government or private institutions. Competition is intense for the few places available at the universities and for employment opportunities. Therefore, the grades that students obtain at the GCE O level, including English, are important for their future academic and professional careers (Wall 2005).

1.3 The history of educational reform in Sri Lanka

Educational policies in Sri Lanka have often been introduced to further egalitarian strategic goals such as reducing disparities in participation in education between urban and rural communities and between boys and girls (Gunawardena 2011). Other goals have included the improvement of quality and meeting the country's economic needs. Successes have been achieved, including the provision of free

education to all Sri Lankans and the nationalisation of private schools in 1944. However, policy intentions have not consistently been translated into action. When action has been taken, questions have been raised concerning the effectiveness of those actions towards realising policy goals (Gunawardena 2011). An example of difficulty in translating policy into practice within English language education is given by Fernando and Mallawa (2003), which will be discussed in section 1.4 below.

A number of issues have hindered the effective implementation of educational policies. One is the political cycle. In Sri Lanka, policy initiatives introduced by politicians and civil servants who are loyal to one political party tend to be overturned whenever the government changes (Gunawardena 1991). Also Gunawardena (2011) has criticised policy makers for being too willing to follow imported educational models, failing to inform policy through research into local conditions.

In some cases, policy objectives may be in competition: demands for economic efficiency may go against the egalitarian principle. For example, the primary education reforms introduced in 1998 set out both to improve the achievement of essential learning competencies and to rationalise provision through the closure of small schools considered to be ‘uneconomical units’. Although the World Bank (2005) evaluated these reforms as successful, Gunawardena (2011) argued that the closures reversed the commitment to education for all because they reduced poor children’s access to education.

Even when the political will to implement reform is maintained, other factors may hinder implementation. A shortage of human and material resources associated with economic constraints has been a recurrent issue, giving rise to problems including large classes, disparities among different types of schools (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.2 for about different types of school), lack of understanding on the part of those expected to implement reform and a lack of effective monitoring and supervision. There has been a particular problem in translating high level intentions from the government policy level into local classroom action. For example, in evaluations of the primary education reforms, Perera and Dharamawardana (2000) found that only 20% of teachers showed that they were competent to implement the new curriculum, while Gunawardena and Lekamage (2004) noted a lack of human resources leading to deficiencies in teacher training and supervision as inhibiting factors.

The successful implementation of educational change and reforms in Sri Lanka suffer for many reasons: a lack of proper planning, the politicised nature and unequal provision of education and lack of human resources for education are among the most serious (Rubasinghe 1990, Canagarajah 1993, Wall 2005, Karunaretna 2009, and Little 2010).

1.4 Previous attempts to reform Sri Lankan English language education

Although it has long been considered desirable, the teaching and testing of English speaking has proved challenging to implement. For example, the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka embarked a large-scale English language teaching programme in the early 1980s, focusing on communication in English rather than on the grammar and reading comprehension that had dominated classrooms in the

1970s. The English programme was affected by many constraints such as lack of teachers, insufficient guidance by in-service advisors and urban and rural disparities (Fernando and Mallawa 2003). Under this programme, plans were drawn up to introduce speaking skills in the GCE O level examination in 1988, but these were not implemented. Again, in 2009, plans were drawn up under the ELSP to assess speaking skills at the school level and the national level, but the test still has not been introduced.

Wall (2005) also described the large-scale English language teaching reform programme (with much in common with current reform proposals) in the early 1980s. Reforms were made in the areas of teaching materials, teacher training, and testing. A series of textbooks called 'English for Me' were designed for school students in Grade 3 – 5 and 'English Every Day' series for Grade 6 – 11. Action was also taken to develop both pre-service and in-service training to teachers on how to use these new materials. In 1984, District English Language Improvement Centres (DELIC) were set up in all parts of the country to provide professional in-service training for newly recruited English teachers.

It was acknowledged at the time that in order for the reform to succeed, the GCE O level examination would also need to be revised to reflect the new priorities.

The keystone of the reform was to be a new examination. It was recognised from quite early on that it would be difficult to persuade teachers and students to use the new materials and methods if there was not also a change in assessment (Wall 2005, p.7).

The 'Old Syllabus' English examination, like the old teaching materials, focused on language structure and reading comprehension and followed the same pattern year after year. This English examination was criticised on the grounds that

candidates could gain good marks only answering questions about reading passages and without needing to write more than a few words, while listening and speaking skills were not tested at all.

The 'New Syllabus' GCE O level examination introduced in 1988 was intended to test all four skills as specified in the first draft of test specifications in 1986 (Pearson 1994, p.91). The Ministry of Education also announced in 1986 that the GCE O level examinations for all subjects would contain an element of 'School Based Continuous Assessments'. The GCE O level was thus intended to consist of two parts: a centrally designed and marked examination paper testing reading and writing, and a series of teacher-designed and assessed classroom activities which would focus on listening and speaking.

In practice, the reform was never fully implemented. The School Based Continuous Assessment programme was withdrawn immediately after its introduction and none of the marks teachers had collected were calculated into students' final GCE O level grades (Wall 2005, Parameswaram 2009). Wall (2005) observed that no official reason was given for this decision, but reported that,

Many believed that it had been introduced too hastily, had been too unwieldy, and was too sensitive an issue at a time when there was a great political turmoil in the country. (Some opponents of the government felt that this form of assessment favoured pupils from urban areas and privileged families, who had more exposure to English and more resources and support than pupils from rural areas) (p.8).

With the withdrawal of School Based Continuous Assessments, the idea of testing speaking and listening was abandoned, and only reading and writing were tested in the year-end GCE O level examination.

Wall and Alderson (1993) in their report on ‘Examining washback: the Sri Lankan impact study’ (the same study was revisited by Wall (2005) – see Chapter 2 – section 2.7), summarised the challenges that they believed had prevented the implementation of the new approach, and which might have hindered the task of enforcing of the intended changes by the GCE O level examinations (washback). These included insufficient exam-specific teacher training, a lack of material resources, inadequate communication between those responsible for the exam and its users, and lack of understanding of the philosophy of new test.

Thus, a high-level educational reform initiative was apparently defeated by a combination of poor planning and local opposition. Challenges such as inadequate teacher training, lack of teaching resources and understanding of the new test, and the communication gap between people from the policy-making level and the school level prevented the intended changes from taking effect.

1.5 Introduction of the New System of Assessment under ELSP

In 2009, the Presidential Secretariat and Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka announced their decision to change the system of assessment. In addition to the already existing written test, the new system would include two elements: continuous assessments by teachers, referred to as School Based Assessments (SBA) and the year-end National Test of Speaking (NTS).

The SBA and the NTS were introduced with the aim of assessing performance-related educational outcomes, such as introducing oneself and picture description in terms of speaking competencies and moving away from structure based courses which focus on reading and writing.

Thus, under the ELSP, emphasis was placed on authentic assessment of speaking skills through the SBA and the NTS as stated as goals and objectives of the English language teaching curriculum. It was also planned that the assessment of speaking, involving a combination of the SBA and the NTS, would make up 20% of the final grade for English in the national examinations (D. Samaraweera, personal interview, July 12, 2012). Samaraweera was the Director of Department of English, National Institute of Education (NIE) in Sri Lanka and one of the participants at the policy-making level in this study (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.1.1).

However, it was not clearly stated what weighting the SBA mark would have as part of the 20%. When he explains about the SBA under ELSP, Edirisinghe (2010), Commissioner General of Examinations, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, states:

It [SBA] should be used to strengthen the final grade the student gets at the GCE (Ordinary Level) Examination (p.xiii).

Edirisinghe's (2010) comments do not indicate what weighting the SBA mark would have as part of 20% of the final grade for English.

In support of the change, the National Institute of Education published the *Teacher Guide: Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English* (hereafter referred to as Teacher Guide) which included curriculum and resource material to support the teaching of spoken English. This book contains series of activities for students' speaking skills and provides framework and guidelines for SBA and was specially compiled for ELSP. To help with the implementation, some English teachers were selected equitably from among all nine provinces in the country as Master Trainers and specially trained in teaching spoken English for three months. This training took the form of residential participatory workshops at the English and Foreign

Languages University, Hyderabad, India and at the Sri Lanka India Centre for English Language Training in Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

These Master Trainers were then expected to provide training to the rest of the teachers in the country (Premachandra 2010). The teacher training course was organised by the Ministry of Education and was conducted by the Master Trainers to assist the English teachers in teaching and assessing speaking skills within the assessment change. It was a ten day 80 hour teacher training. The training was organised with the aim of facilitating the English teachers in the country and the teachers in turn to improve the speaking skills of their students (Sirisena 2010).

Ahead of the introduction of the new system, all English teachers were offered two weeks of in-service teacher training conducted by the Master Trainers. Master Trainers were also involved as resource persons in the preparation of the Teacher Guide, which includes the curriculum and resource material for teaching, tools for the School Based Assessment, and action-plan for teacher training (Jayamanne 2010, Sirisena 2010).

The Master Trainers visit schools to monitor the teaching of speaking, while the In-Service Advisors, who are selected on the basis of their teaching experience, academic merits, and available cadre vacancies in a particular educational division (zone), monitor English language teaching and learning activities in normal classes (where reading and writing are taught), and they have been existing in the educational system even before the ELSP was introduced.

The Master Trainers and In-Service Advisors have regular meetings with the Assistant Director of Education (English), who is in-charge of activities related to

teaching, learning and assessment of English in a particular educational zone (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.1.2), to discuss issues in the teaching and learning activities in schools. The Assistant Director of Education prepares reports based on the discussion to be sent to the Ministry of Education for any further change in the ELSP.

It should be noted that in schools there were five classes (40 minutes each) per week allocated, as specified in the curriculum, in the time-table for teaching English skills before the introduction of ELSP in 2011. The prescribed English Pupil's Books and English Workbook, which were already being used, contained lessons and activities to develop reading, writing, listening, speaking and grammar skills. However, the policy makers complained that teachers focused more on reading and writing activities in the prescribed books for the reasons that only reading and writing skills were tested in the GCE O level but not speaking (see Section 1.2 above).

The policy makers intended that the decision to test speaking will make the teachers and students focus more on speaking activities in the prescribed books (Fernando 2010).

To increase the attention given to English speaking in schools, in 2011, it was decided that one class per week should be allocated to speaking. It was also decided that the SBA for speaking under the ELSP would be introduced in 2011 and that the first year-end NTS would be administered in 2012 (Edirisinghe 2010, Jayamane 2010).

The SBA and the NTS would consist of a number of activities representing several kinds of spoken interactions. The activities suggested for speaking assessments in

the Teacher Guide were: dialogues, role plays, telephone conversations, tongue twisters, simple orders and commands, questions and answers, recitations, story-telling, dramatizations, descriptions, oral presentations, speeches, interviews, panel discussions, debates, preference line, information gap activities, press conference, open classroom discussions, and language games (Ministry of Education 2010, p.6).

It was expected that the assessment of speaking would provide an opportunity for authentic speech and communication and improve the learners' overall level of speaking proficiency. Thus, the assessment of speaking was intended to be used as a means to encourage teachers to focus more on teaching speaking and to encourage students to improve their speaking ability.

As determined by the government, the SBA for speaking was launched in 2011 and has continued since then. In SBA, the students were given in-class assessment activities prepared by teachers based on the activities prescribed in the Teacher Guide and English Pupil's Books and English Workbook. The in-class assessment results were recorded for the examination authorities. It should be noted that there is no official announcement about the weight of in-class assessment marks towards the final grading. The reason might be that the proposed NTS was still not finalised as planned until 2013 when the final data for this study were collected. There might be a possibility of defining the weighting of SBA once the NTS would be finalised (Atugoda 2010).

The NTS was not actually implemented in 2012 (as originally intended), but was postponed. I learned that the revised plan for the implementation of the test envisaged first administration in 2015 (D. Samaraweera, personal interview, July

12, 2012). Reasons for the continual postponement of the NTS included the practical difficulties of training a large number of resource persons as oral examiners (about 8000 English teachers), and the time needed to assess the oral performance of candidates who sat for GCE O level (about 650,000 candidates). It was also decided that two oral examiners would be used to assess the oral performance of one candidate, adding to the logistical challenge. However, in addition to these reasons, the NTS was again postponed indefinitely after a new government came into power in 2015 (D. Samaraweera, personal communication, November 24, 2015).

1.6 Purpose of the study

The impetus for the research came when the decision to introduce the speaking test was announced in 2010. I decided to investigate whether the decision of the policy makers to use the test as a ‘lever for change’ (Pearson 1988) was successful, specifically, whether the introduction of a speaking test would make the teachers focus more on speaking in the classroom.

Most previous washback studies have shown that tests have failed to have the intended effects (see Chapter 2 – section 2.3.2.2). In spite of the good intentions surrounding the introduction of a test, a range of factors appear to affect whether changes succeed or fail in influencing teacher behaviours (see Chapter 2 – section 2.4). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the effects of the new system of assessment as it is currently in operation (with the planned SBA conducted by teachers, but without the planned NTS), whether effects have occurred as intended by the policy makers and how and why they have or have not occurred.

In my study, I set out to:

- understand how the selected participants reacted to the changes made in the Public English examination system, focusing in particular on the teachers and students involved.
- study the effect of a system of assessment on educational practices in the light of the new arrangements for assessing speaking, whether effects had occurred as intended and how and why they had occurred.
- explore the nature and the scope of the washback effect in terms of teachers' and students' perceptions and teachers' classroom practices within the context of the change in the system of assessment.

Since the purpose of this study is to explore the changes that a new system of assessment has brought to teaching of English in Sri Lanka, it focuses on how classroom teaching and learning activities have been affected by the changes. This focus involved the following steps which paved the way to understanding the research problems and associated validity concerns connected with data collection instruments, analyses, and interpretation:

1. Exploration of theories of washback;
2. Investigation of the context in Sri Lanka to build understanding of the intended washback effect of the new system of assessment (preliminary investigation);
3. Pilot studies: development and validation of research instruments and methods;
4. Main study.

In summary, it appears that the successful implementation of education change and reforms in Sri Lanka have suffered because policy makers have failed to comprehend the constraints – lack of resources, large classes, wide disparities among different types of schools and lack of effective monitoring and supervision – prevalent in the country (Gunawardena *et al.*2004). Moreover, the changes introduced by one government have been eliminated from the curriculum by the successive governments (National Education Commission 2003).

Even though decisions were taken to assess speaking in 1988, they suffered the same plight as other reforms for the same reasons. Again, the Sri Lankan government decided to implement speaking assessments within the ELSP in 2011 with the hope that the decision to assess speaking through the SBA and the NTS would make the teachers and students focus more on speaking.

1.7 The researcher's position and personal motivation for undertaking this research

As a teacher working for more than 25 years in government schools and in a university, I observed that even students who were good at writing in English found it hard to speak in English.

The policy makers responsible for introducing the English as a Life Skill Programme believed that the decision to test speaking under the ELSP would drive teachers and students to focus more on teaching and learning speaking than before. I decided to undertake this research to investigate whether the government's decision to innovate teaching and learning activities through assessment was a realistic means of increasing the focus on speaking in the classroom.

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven Chapters. It explores what changes the new system of assessment has brought to the teaching of English in Sri Lanka and whether the decision of the policy makers to use the system of assessment (the SBA had already been introduced in 2011 and the NTS was due to be introduced soon) as a ‘lever for change’ (Pearson 1988) was successful. It sets out to investigate teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the assessment change through questionnaire surveys and then to investigate teachers’ and students’ classroom practices in speaking classes through observations of teaching and learning activities.

Following this introductory Chapter, in Chapter 2, I present a review of the literature on the effect of testing on teaching and learning, discussing washback research conducted in language education. This review of the research literature on washback suggests that if an assessment is to have the intended effects on teaching and learning activities, a large range of factors that affect how innovations succeed or fail and that influence teacher and student classroom practices should be considered. I develop a conceptual model for this present study, incorporating key factors for investigation. The proposed model will be helpful for exploring how stakeholders at different levels within the Sri Lankan educational system reacted when the assessment change was introduced, and provide a means for exploring whether the changes that have occurred in teaching and learning have come about in the way intended by those who framed the assessment policy.

In Chapter 3, I describe the approaches that I followed when planning data collection and analysis and interpretation of data. In the same Chapter, I describe

the development procedures of data collection instruments for semi-structured interviews, for the teacher and student surveys and for the classroom observations.

In Chapter 4, I present the findings from semi-structured interviews. In Chapter 5, I present the findings from questionnaire surveys and in Chapter 6, classroom observations. The extent to which the findings from the three data collection instruments support each other is discussed.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I review these findings and draw conclusions about the effects of assessment on teaching in this particular context and the implications of this study for this and other educational settings.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter reviews the literature relating to washback and suggests an appropriate conceptual framework for the research. It explores the theoretical underpinnings and debates associated with the effects of public examinations on teaching and learning English as a second and foreign language.

The review focuses on the ways in which public examinations, especially when they undergo changes, have been found to have an effect on the curriculum, on participants' attitudes and perceptions, and on their teaching and learning activities.

This Chapter consists of several interrelated sections which substantiate the theoretical and practical framework of the study.

After a brief introductory section, the second section explores the concept of washback by discussing various key terms that have been used to describe this educational phenomenon and defines what washback refers to in this present study.

The third section explores the complexity of washback by focusing on certain aspects of teaching and learning affected by washback.

The fourth section discusses what factors beyond the test itself may interact with the effects of testing on teachers' curricular planning and instruction.

The fifth section will discuss washback hypotheses and mechanisms in order to understand how washback happens and relationships between the mediating factors. It will then propose a conceptual framework for the present study.

The sixth section of this Chapter will explore how the phenomenon of washback has been investigated in different educational contexts in order to propose a suitable research approach for this present study.

The last section reviews washback studies within the Sri Lankan educational context, in which the present study is situated, and summarises key findings and derives implications for this study.

2.2 Washback: Definition

This section starts with a review of various definitions given to the effects of testing on teaching and learning activities, and then explains the complexity of washback focusing on aspects of teaching and learning affected by washback, characteristics of washback and factors mediating washback. Finally, it discusses mechanisms through which the effects of testing may operate.

2.2.1 Definitions of effects of testing

Effects of testing on teaching and learning are referred to as '*backwash*' (Hughes 1989, Khaniyah 1990, Biggs 1995, Spolsky 1995), or '*washback*' (Alderson and Wall 1993, Messick 1996, Bailey 1996). Green (2007a) points out that 'In the literature (both in applied linguistics and in general education), the terms *backwash* and *washback* are both used, and are invariably seen as interchangeable' (p.1). In some earlier usages of the term, the meaning of washback was confined to unforeseen and unintended changes (Khaniyah 1990, Spolsky 1995, 1996). However, it now includes any effects intended or unintended – that are induced on teaching and learning as a result of testing (Alderson and Wall 1993, Bachman and Palmer, 1996, Hughes 2003, Cheng 2003, Cheng 2005, Wall 2005, Green 2007a)

and therefore generally considered a neutral term (Alderson and Wall 1993), and ‘*washback* has gained in currency and is now generally accepted in the applied linguistics literature’ (Green 2007a, p.2).

The term washback will be used throughout this study with its neutral meaning: i.e. it is used to refer both intended and unintended effects of a change of public examination on aspects of teaching and learning. In other words, any effects associated with the introduction of the assessment change – testing speaking at the school level and the national level within the English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP) (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5) – intended or unintended will be considered washback in this study. Note, also, that the use of ‘washback’ or ‘backwash’ may be retained in its original form when quoting directly from other sources.

Washback has been described as occurring at two levels: the micro level and the macro level. What happens in schools as a result of the introduction of a test is described as the micro level and the effect on society as a whole is described as the macro level (Messick 1994, 1996; Bachman and Palmer 1996, 2010; Hamp-Lyons 1997; Wall 1997, 2005; Andrews 2003).

However, Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010), McNamara (1996, 2000), Hamp-Lyons (1997, 1998), Wall (1997, 2005), Shohamy (2001) used the term *washback* to refer to the effects of tests on teaching and learning at the micro level (that is the effects of a test on individual students and teachers), and the effects at the macro level (that is the effects of tests on society and its educational systems) are termed as *impact*.

A review of the washback literature shows that the term washback has been defined and adapted to suit the purpose and context in which it is explored. For example, Green (2007a) in his IELTS washback study excluded the exploration of macro issues at the societal level.

In summary, the narrow definition of washback focuses on the effects of testing on certain aspects of teaching and learning activities. The wider view of washback (also defined as test impact) focuses on educational system and society at large. I will use the term ‘washback’ in this study to refer to the effects of the assessment change in the public examination system on teachers’ perceptions and attitudes, teaching behaviour – classroom teaching and testing practices, use of prescribed teaching materials in the curriculum, and students’ perceptions and attitudes to testing speaking at a micro-level, and also to refer to the effects of the assessment change on the educational system at a macro-level. The term ‘impact’ will not be used since the term washback in this study will be used to refer the effects of the assessment change at both micro and macro level. That is using the term ‘washback’ in its most general sense.

2.3 Complexity of washback

Research in the field of language testing has shown that washback is a highly intricate rather than a monolithic phenomenon. Washback is considered as a complex phenomenon, because it influences various aspects of teaching and learning, can be described in terms of a variety of characteristics and is mediated by several factors.

2.3.1 Aspects of teaching and learning affected by washback

Washback is a complex phenomenon in that a test can influence various aspects of teaching and learning: tests have had an effect on content of language lessons (Alderson and Wall 1993, Hughes 1993, Bailey 1996, Cheng 1997, 2005, Watanabe 1996, 2003, Read and Hayes 2003, Wall 2005), class time allocation (Lam 1994, Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996, Shohamy *et al.* 1996, Read and Hayes 2003), textbooks and past papers (Cheng 1997, Andrews *et al.* 2002, Read and Hayes 2003), teaching methods (Cheng 1997, Andrews *et al.* 2002), and learning (Shohamy *et al.* 1996, Cheng 1998, Andrews *et al.* 2002, Ferman 2003, Green 2007a). For example, Ferman (2003) found that the EFL (English Foreign Language) Oral Matriculation Test, introduced by the Ministry of Education into the Israeli educational system, resulted in strong washback on the teaching and learning activities in the classes in the Israeli High Schools by focusing teachers' and students' attention and efforts on the oral skills. Wall (2005) in her Sri Lankan study, which investigated the impact of new English examination on classroom teaching, found that testing had effects on contents of teaching, but not on the way that teachers teach.

As an example of the effects on different aspects of teaching and learning, Jiang and Sharpling (2011) investigated eight Chinese graduate students embarking on further studies within an English-speaking higher education environment in the UK. They aimed to find out the students' retrospective views through interviews about the relationship between language learning strategies (LLS) and assessment change in different contexts. They found that changes in the mode of assessment from summative to formative and in the language learning environment influenced

students' LLS. The students' LLS were connected to the mode of assessment. When students found that they were assessed more by formative measures on their preparatory English course, such as through classroom participation, group work and assignments, as opposed to summative exams, they changed their LLS to suit formative mode of assessments. They further explain that when the assessment is to write assignment, the students focus more on how to write an assignment effectively rather than focusing on aspects of language such as vocabulary and grammar.

However, the study pointed out that even though changes in assessment led to different ways of learning the English language, the availability of an English language environment also had an effect on students' LLS. The factors mediating the process of washback are discussed in Section 2.4 below.

2.3.2 Characteristics of washback

Washback has also been found to have the characteristics *of intentionality and value, specificity, intensity, seasonality and persistence* (Watanabe 2003), which are discussed below.

2.3.2.1 Washback intentionality

The washback of a test may be intended or unintended. When a test brings about the changes it was introduced to encourage, then it has the intended washback (Messick 1989, McNamara 1996, Watanabe 2003, Wall and Horák 2008, Zhang and Elder 2009).

Zhang and Elder (2009) reviewed the College English Test – Spoken English Test (CET-SET) in China, which was designed to assess the oral communicative ability of Chinese university and college students who have undertaken compulsory English study at a Chinese university. In their review, they evaluated the CET-SET in terms of reliability, validity, authenticity, inter-activeness, fairness, impact and washback. Zhang and Elder explained that ‘The washback effect of the CET-SET on teaching, learning, and self-evaluation is intended to be positive in that it is designed to help English learners to practice the various language functions emphasized in the test syllabus when preparing for the test and to improve their oral communicative ability through the performance of authentic tasks resembling those which occur in everyday communication contexts’ (p.308). They argued in their review that the test had the potential for positive impact on teachers and students in terms of their learning attitudes and behaviours.

On the other hand, when a test has brought about changes that are different from those it was introduced to encourage, it has an unintended washback effect (Andrews *et al.* 2002, Qi 2005). Andrews *et al.* (2002) studied the effects of the introduction of the Use of English (UE) oral examination, taken in students’ final year of schooling (Secondary 7), where a pass is a pre-requisite for admission to university in Hong Kong. The UE was introduced in response to the concerns, by the universities, about the level of spoken English among undergraduates. Andrews *et al.* (2002) employed a neutral testing instrument based on a speaking test to measure the influence of it on students’ performance in spoken English. The reason for devising a neutral testing instrument was ‘... to prevent the possibility of effects resulting from students having practised for a specific test format’ (p.212).

This test was administered to 93 students and the videotaped oral performance of these students was rated by eight experienced and trained oral assessors. In the recordings organisational features (the ways in which students managed the oral, including the strategies they employed at different stages of the test), and language features (linguistic realisation – function and forms – of those strategies) were analysed. They found evidence of unintended superficial learning outcomes, such as familiarisation with the test format, rote-learning of test strategies, and producing memorised phrases rather than internalisation. Andrews *et al.* (2002) concluded that ‘... the nature of the washback on student performance has not necessarily been of the sort anticipated or intended by those responsible for the introduction of the UE oral’ (p.220). The findings suggest that the effects of testing are not always as intended by the authorities.

This section has explained that a particular test may bring about changes as expected. At the same time, the effects of a test are not always as intended. It is logical to presume that when intended changes have occurred, the washback effects are considered as positive, and when unintended changes have occurred, the effects can be either positive or negative. The following section explains when the effects of a test are considered positive or negative.

2.3.2.2 Value of washback: Positive, Negative

Value of washback refers to the ‘positivity’ or ‘negativity’ of the effects of a test on teaching and learning and participants involved in these activities.

It has been argued that a new or revised test, which is introduced with the intention of promoting teaching and learning, could drive changes in curriculum, teaching

methods, and students' approaches to learning (Frederiksen 1984, Crooks 1988, Frederiksen and Collins 1989, Biggs 1995, Wall 2005, Green 2007a). However, washback studies in different contexts show that when tests are used as 'levers for change' (Pearson 1988), they do not always produce the positive changes, they are introduced to encourage (Alderson and Wall 1993, Wall 2005).

According to Cheng and Curtis (2003), when a public examination is used as a vehicle for promoting positive curriculum changes, negative effects can also occur. The positive and the negative test effects are related to washback direction (Buck 1988, Alderson and Wall 1993, Brown and Hudson 2002, Hughes 2003, Green 2007a).

The direction of washback – positive or negative – will depend on the extent to which it promotes or inhibits the intended educational changes (Hughes 1989). Green (2007a) argues that:

... washback is often evaluated as positive or negative according to how far it encourages or discourages forms of teaching or learning judged to be appropriate (p.6).

This suggests that since the direction of washback is judged on the basis of appropriate teaching and learning activities, it is down to individual stakeholders (who might have different educational intentions) who determine what are considered to be appropriate teaching and learning activities (Green 2007a). Thus, an important point to note here is that evaluating the direction of washback (unlike intentionality) is dependent on stakeholders, and their educational preferences. Green (2007a) argues that 'there are no agreed standards for evaluating washback'

(p.3). He further explains that effects of a test are realised through the interactions between the test, teachers and learners.

In similar vein, Alderson (1992) argues that the distinction between positive and negative depends on who the evaluation is for. Watanabe (2003) also explains that:

[O]ne type of outcome may be evaluated as being positive by teachers, whereas the same outcome may be judged to be negative by school principals. Thus, it is important to identify the evaluator when it comes to passing value judgement (p.21).

Watanabe's (2003) argument also suggests that the value judgement of washback is dependent on the evaluator. Cheng and Curtis (2003) also argue that the evaluation of washback as positive or negative needs to be context-sensitive:

Whether the effect of testing is deemed to be positive or negative should also depend on *who* it is that actually conducts the investigation within a particular education context, as well as *where*, the school or university contexts, *when*, the time and duration of using such assessment practices, *why*, the rationale, and *how*, the different approaches used by different participants within the context (p.8).

As seen in the above discussions, there is general consensus among researchers in language testing and education that washback can be either positive or negative depending on the extent to which what happens in classrooms reflects individual stakeholders' judgement (Alderson and Wall 1993, Messick 1996, Bailey 1999, Cheng 2005, Wall 2005, Green 2007a).

These arguments suggest that evaluation of the direction of washback depends on participants and other aspects within the context. By way of example, Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) collected data, through interviews with teachers and classroom observations made of TOEFL (Test of English as a foreign Language) preparation classes and non-TOEFL preparation classes, to explore and understand teachers'

attitudes to teaching TOEFL and what was going on in classrooms at a specialised language institute in the USA. In addition to interviewing the two teachers were observed, they held group interviews with five teachers with experience of teaching TOEFL, and four individual interviews with teachers with varying degrees of TOEFL preparation experience. They found that most teachers had negative attitudes to TOEFL. The teachers considered TOEFL as 'inauthentic' and 'non-communicative' (p.285). That is, the teachers had negative attitudes to the effects of the TOEFL on their teaching practices.

However, Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) reported that two of the teachers had positive attitudes towards teaching TOEFL. The teachers considered that 'they could help students cope with something important' (p.285). Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) also found that some difference between TOEFL and non-TOEFL classes that were common to both teachers observed: 'fewer digressions and less laughter in both teachers' TOEFL classes' (p.292).

Alderson and Hamp-Lyons's (1996) study suggests that within the same context the direction of washback varies and is dependent on stakeholders, and their educational beliefs.

To summarise, theories of washback have suggested that testing influences teaching and learning activities. However, this influence could take different *directions*. Some authors in the field of both general and language education believe that testing can have a positive effect on teachers and learners (Popham 1987, Fredericksen and Collins, 1989, Heyneman and Ransom, 1990, Biggs 1995, Wolf 1997, James 2000). For example, Heyneman and Ransom (1990) argue that tests can be a powerful,

low-cost means to influence the quality of what teachers teach and what learners learn at school.

However, others believe that the effects of any form of testing are more likely to be negative (Madaus 1988, Shohamy 1997, Zeidner 1998). For example, Madaus (1988) contends that ‘The tests can become the ferocious master of the educational process, not the compliant servant they should be. Measurement-driven instruction invariably leads to cramming, narrows the curriculum; concentrates attention on those skills most amenable to testing; constrains the creativity and spontaneity of teachers and students; and finally, demeans the professional judgement of teachers’ (p.85). Madaus’s (1988) comments show that some commentators have negative attitudes towards the influence of testing on teaching and learning activities.

The above discussions show that the direction of washback can be either positive or negative. However, there is no consensus among researchers about the direction washback may take. The discussions also suggest that the evaluation of the direction of washback depends on the orientation of the evaluators who pass value judgement on the washback effects and other aspects of the context such as where the investigation is conducted, the rationale and duration of such investigation.

2.3.2.3 Washback specificity

The effects of a test may be general or specific. General washback is the overall effect of a test that makes teachers and students engage in activities which they would not otherwise engage in. Specific washback is the effect of one part or aspect of a test. Most of the washback studies focused on new or revised tests implemented in different contexts found that teachers allocated more periods in the timetable,

and engaged in examination preparation activities in the classroom which they did not engage in otherwise. For an example, Lam (1993, 1994) found evidence of general washback in his washback study on New Use of English (NUE) held at the end of secondary schools in Hong Kong. The data collected through a questionnaire to teachers suggested that the number of periods that teachers devoted to examination preparation within the school timetable increased following the introduction of the NUE.

Specific washback relates to a particular aspect of a test (Watanabe 2003). For example, Watanabe (2003) explains that there is '[a] belief that if a listening component is included in the test, the students and teachers will emphasize this aspect in their learning or teaching' (ibid, p.20). Stecher *et al.* (2003) conducted surveys of teachers to investigate the effects of Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) test on the methods of teachers used to teach writing. They found evidence of specific washback in teaching and learning activities: the test had widely influenced the content of the writing curriculum and methods used to teach writing incorporated the processes and strategies connected with the test into existing teaching practices.

2.3.2.4 Washback intensity

Washback can vary in intensity, which is often associated with the importance given to the results by the teachers, students and other stakeholders (Green 2007a), or in other words, it is a function of the stakes of a test (Cheng 1998, 2005). High- stakes tests are associated with more intense washback as teachers and learners may adjust their behaviour more when test results matter most to them. Green (2013) argues

that washback intensity refers to ‘the degree to which participants will adjust their behaviour to meet the demands of a test’ (p.40).

Shohamy *et al.* (1996) found differences in washback intensity between two tests in their study in Israel. They investigated the Arabic as a foreign Language Test (ASL), and the English Foreign Language (EFL) Oral Test to find the washback effect of these tests on teachers in Israel through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. They found that the ASL test had little effect on the content of teaching whereas the EFL test had a greater effect on the content and method of teaching. The teachers reported that they focused on the oral skills and activities to be tested, and more class time was allocated to EFL preparations. They explained that ‘the Arabic test is not a high-stakes test and the results are not used for any decision-making or placement purposes’, and that ‘the EFL test on the other hand, is a high-stakes test in the sense that the individual test results affect graduation from high school and entrance to tertiary institutions’ (p.315). The effect of the EFL test on teaching activities was more intense since it was a high-stakes test, while the ASL test had weaker effect on teaching since it was not considered as a high-stakes test.

2.3.2.5 Differential washback

Differential washback refers to the phenomenon whereby different effects from a test may be experienced by teachers, learners, and others (Green 2007a). The extent and type of teaching and learning for the test vary among participants. Burrows (2003) in her study on washback in classroom-based assessment in the Australian Adult Migrant English Program found through questionnaire, interview, and

classroom observations that changes occurred for many teachers, but not for all, and that the changes occurred to differing degrees in the use of materials, teaching methods, the percentage of time spent in their lessons in relation to the new classroom-based assessment system.

Tsagari (2007), in her review of washback studies, noted that ‘the studies that found evidence of washback on teaching also found large differences in the way teachers teach towards the same exam, with some adopting more overt ‘teaching to the test’ while others follow more creative and independent approaches’ (p.36).

The discussions suggest that washback effects of a particular test on teachers are not the same and affect individual teachers to differing degrees.

2.3.2.6 Seasonality and persistence (length) of washback

The issue of time has been noted in many studies of washback (Alderson and Wall 1993, Shohamy *et al.* 1996, Watanabe 1996a, Bailey 1999). For example, Watanabe (1996a) found in the university entrance examinations in Japan that effects of testing on teaching changed according to how close the test was. He observed one teacher when the test was still distant and another teacher when the test was imminent. He found that the teacher who was observed when the test was imminent taught content that was much more closely related to the test.

The time factor is also mentioned in relation to the intensity of washback. When the tests get closer, there is a greater washback. For example, Alderson and Wall (1993), who observed that there was greater use of exam materials when the exam was closer in their Sri Lankan washback study.

A second issue of time relates to the introduction and use of a test over a period of years. Washback effects may undergo changes over time and may not last indefinitely within the system (Watanabe 2003). Shohamy *et al.* (1996) – discussed in section 2.3.2.4 above – found that the effects of the Arabic as a Second Language (ASL) test decreased over the years to the point where it had no effect. The low stakes of the ASL test (which became clearer as the test became more established in the education system) might be the reason why the washback effect on teaching did not persist at the time of research in 1995, although it had apparently been greater when the ASL test was first introduced in 1988.

With reference to characteristics of washback, the present study will focus on whether the effects of the speaking test on teaching is as intended (washback intentionality), whether the washback effects are considered as positive or negative by the stakeholders (washback value), whether the decision to test speaking influence all the teachers to the same extent (differential washback), and to what extent the assessment change influences teachers' practices in the classroom (washback intensity). However, the seasonality and persistence of washback is beyond the scope of this study, since it is not a longitudinal study but one that investigates the effects of the assessment change on teaching within a short period of time (six months).

2.4 Factors mediating the process of washback

The complexity of washback also lies in the fact that the process of washback being generated is mediated by several factors (Wall and Alderson 1993, Shohamy *et al.* 1996, Wall 1996, 2005, Brown 1997, Green 2007a, Jiang and Sharpling 2001, Xiao

et al. 2011). For example: test factors (e.g. methods and content of the test, purpose of the test, mode of assessment), and participant factors (e.g. teachers' beliefs about best methods of teaching).

Empirical studies report that the characteristics of washback such as its specificity, intensity, intentionality and differential aspects, and the length and value of washback (see section 2.3.2 above), dependent on an interplay between these various factors (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996, Shohamy *et al.* 1996, Brown 1997, Wall 1997, Cheng and Curtis 2003, Watanabe 2003, Cheng 2003, Spratt 2005, Wall 2005, Green 2007a, Tsagari 2007, Wall and Horák 2008, Onaiba 2013). The factors may include: teacher related factors (e.g. teachers' perceptions and attitudes to assessment change), micro-context factors (e.g. school setting in which the assessment change is implemented), and macro-context factors which are the educational system and the society in which a test is used) – see Figure 2.1 below.

Researchers of washback have identified a wide range of factors that seem to mediate the process of washback. Cheng (2003) conducted a study within the context of the Hong Kong secondary school system to investigate whether changes to a high-stakes school leaving public examination in English (Hong Kong Certificate Examination in English – HKCEE) toward more task-based assessment approaches would actually change school teachers' perceptions of different aspects of teaching and learning. The major change to the examination was integrated listening, reading and writing paper with the intention of improving the current English language teaching and learning standards in Kong Hong secondary schools. The survey focused on teachers of English in secondary schools in Kong Hong. The questionnaires to teachers were issued twice in a one year interval for comparison

of (reported) teaching practices before and after the change to the examination. The findings suggested a match between the teachers' perceptions and those of the policy makers. However, teachers' daily teaching activities and their perceptions of the underlying teaching methodology associated with the new HKCEE remained unchanged. The teachers were exam-oriented, and lessons were content-based and predominantly teacher-fronted. The study found that teacher-related factors, teaching textbooks, lack of teaching and learning resources, students' current English level mediated the expected effects of washback.

In a review paper, Spratt (2005) classified the factors identified by empirical studies as affecting degrees and kinds of washback into teacher-related factors, resources, the school, and the exam itself. Watanabe (1996b) and Wall (2005) separated these factors into micro-context (teacher and student factors), assessment related factors (methods, contents), and macro-context (factors in the wider educational system) in order to explain how these factors are mediating the generation of washback.

This section discusses mediating factors such as teacher and student-related factors, the classroom setting and the school atmosphere, assessment-related factors, and factors linked to the educational administration, geography, politics, and resources in relation to the context of the study (see Figure 2.1 below).

Since, these factors are considered to mediate the effects of testing on teaching and learning activities, I focus on some of these factors which might promote or prevent the effects of the assessment change under the ELSP in Sri Lanka.

Figure 2.1 Factors identified by empirical studies as mediating degree and type of washback

Micro-context		Macro-context
Teacher and student factors	Assessment related factors	
<p>Teacher related factors:</p> <p>Teachers' perceptions and attitude to aspects of teaching, learning and testing</p> <p>Teaching experience</p> <p>Teachers' education, training and awareness of assessment change</p> <p>Student related factors:</p> <p>Students perceptions and attitudes to aspects of teaching, their own learning activities and testing</p> <p>School and classroom and head teacher factors:</p> <p>School atmosphere and cultural factors</p> <p>Classroom setting</p> <p>Class size</p> <p>The grade teachers teach</p> <p>School principal</p>	<p>Design and administration of assessment:</p> <p>its proximity</p> <p>its stakes</p> <p>the status of the language it tests</p> <p>its purpose</p> <p>the formats it employs</p> <p>the weighting of individual papers</p> <p>when the exam was introduced</p> <p>how familiar the exam is to teachers</p>	<p>Educational administration:</p> <p>How supportive in passing message about the changes to teachers and students and in implementing the change</p> <p>how much the administrators put pressure on teachers to achieve results</p> <p>Geographical factors:</p> <p>Available facilities like transport and electricity , whether schools located in war affected areas</p> <p>Political factors:</p> <p>How much the new change depends on politically motivated decisions</p> <p>Resources:</p> <p>the availability of textbooks and exam support materials</p>

2.4.1 Teacher-related factors

The findings of washback studies in the field of language testing demonstrate that teacher-related factors are very important in mediating whether washback occurs, how and to what degree. Spratt (2005) in her review of empirical studies of washback explains the role a teacher can play in determining washback effects and 'how much teachers can therefore become agents for promoting positive washback' (ibid. p.5). However, teachers' roles as agents for promoting washback may be

contingent upon factors such as teachers' beliefs, perceptions and attitudes, their teaching experience, academic qualifications, and teacher training (Watanabe 1996b, Spratt 2005, Cheng 2008). For example, Watanabe (1996a) investigated the relationship between the Japanese university entrance examination and the use of the grammar translation approach to teaching in the years leading up to the examination. The entrance examinations based on the guidelines issued by the Japanese Ministry of Education 'emphasize the need for oral communication skills (including daily conversation, note taking, giving speeches and debating) as well as reading and writing' (p.321). One of the entrance examinations placed a particular emphasis on reading skills, and the other had rarely included translation questions in the past. Two secondary-school teachers (with similar years of teaching experience) who help learners with target university examinations were selected from '*yobiko*' (preparatory schools). Each teacher was observed when teaching two types of preparatory courses for the university entrance examination: one course was more oriented towards grammar translation than the other. The findings suggest that one teacher appeared to be oriented towards grammar translation in both courses, but the other teacher was similar to the former when he/she was teaching on the grammar translation oriented target exam course, but different from the former when teaching for the non-grammar translation target exam course. He/she seemed to be interacting with students more frequently, seemed to place more emphasis on the use of English when teaching for the non-grammar translation target exam course. Watanabe (1996a) concluded that '[T]eacher factors, such as educational background, personal beliefs and teaching experience may outweigh the possible effect of the entrance examinations' (p.318). The discussions show that

teacher-related factors mediate the process of washback and influence the direction and degree of washback.

In similar vein, Cheng (2008) concluded from her study in Hong Kong (see Section 2.4 above) that '[T]eacher factors, including personal beliefs, past education, and academic background seemed to be more important [than student, test and context related factors] in determining the teaching methodology a teacher employs' (p.352).

The following paragraphs, briefly discusses teacher related factors found to mediate the process of washback.

2.4.1.1 Teachers' perceptions and attitudes

Several washback studies reported that teachers' perceptions and attitudes to the following aspects of teaching, learning and testing are important mediating factors in washback:

- the relationship between the test and the textbook (Wall and Alderson 1993, Wall 2005);
- effective teaching methods (Watanabe 1996a);
- awareness (of the existence and design of the test) (Spratt 2005);
- stakes and usefulness of the test, status of the language and skill tested (Shohamy *et al.* 1996);
- teachers perceptions of their students' perceptions (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996);

- teaching philosophy (Lam 1994);
- perceptions of the extent to which the test contravenes their current teaching practices (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996).

The teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the tests also affect how they prepare their classroom materials and their lessons (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996). Turner (2001) found that when teachers are involved in test design processes, their attitudes towards the test become more positive.

Teachers' personalities and their willingness and commitment to innovate also mediate washback (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996, Wall 2005). Wall (2005) noted that 'examinations cannot influence teachers to change their practices if they are not committed to the new ideas' (p.283). Hence, teachers' commitments to the change are suggested as one of the factors that influence washback.

2.4.1.2 Teaching experience

Studies investigating the relationship between effects of testing on teaching and learning activities reported that teachers' experience in teaching may also mediate the effects of testing on teaching and learning (Lam 1994, Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996, Watanabe 2000, Pan 2009, Onaiba 2013). Lam (1994) reported that experienced teachers are less affected by syllabus change because they are confident and realistic in assessing what is effective in their working situation as a result of more years of experience. Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) found that the 'TOEFL affects both *what* and *how* teachers [with varying degrees of experience] teach, but the effect is not the same in degrees or in kind from teacher

to teacher ...' (p.295). Onaiba (2013) argues that 'teachers with more years of teaching would have the ability to alter and modify their teaching methods and techniques in response to the demands of the exam introduced' (p.74).

Teaching experience seems to be one of the teacher-related factors which affect whether and how washback occurs.

2.4.1.3 Teachers' education, teacher training, and awareness of assessment change

Washback studies reported that in addition to teachers' experience in teaching, the amount of methodological training they have received (Andrews 2003), their training in teaching towards specific tests and in how to use test related textbooks (Wall and Alderson 1993), teachers' preparedness for changes to the curriculum or for pedagogical changes (Falvey 1996, Cheng 1997 and 2005), and teachers' awareness of the assessment change (Wall and Alderson 1993, Chapman and Snyder 2000, Wall 2005) are important factors mediating washback.

Wall (2005) points out that an examination cannot influence teachers '... if they [teachers] do not have the skills that will enable them to experiment with, evaluate and make appropriate adjustments to new methods' (p.283). Cheng (2005) also made a similar point to Wall's (2005) that when teachers do not have the ability and skills they may not change their way of teaching. Wall (2005) also pointed that teachers would use more assessment related materials in their teaching that were being taken from "past exam papers, official exam support material, or commercial examination preparations books" (p.20).

Some studies also reported that teacher's access to and familiarity with exam support materials (Wall and Alderson 1993, Cheng 1997) also mediate washback.

In summary, teacher-related factors as discussed above appear to be crucial in mediating washback being generated, and affect whether and how teachers plan and implement their classroom teaching and the contents of lessons. They may also explain the reasons why washback may influence some teachers, but not others (Lam 1994, Shohamy *et al.* 1996, Cheng 2005).

2.4.2 Student related factors

The purpose of this section is to examine how students' perceptions and attitudes towards assessment mediate the process of washback.

2.4.2.1 Students' perceptions and attitudes

Students' perception of and attitudes towards tests may be important in mediating the effects of testing. Several washback studies reported that students' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching, learning and testing are important mediating factors in washback (Cheng 1998, Read and Hayes 2003, Shohamy *et al.* 1996, Green 2005, Xie 2015).

Xie (2015) focused on changes made to two design aspects of an English language Proficiency Test – the College English Test (CET) in China. The first set of changes was to adjust component weighting (weight assigned to different test papers) and the second was to add more open testing methods (open-ended item formats) and reduce the proportion of multiple-choice items. Through a questionnaire survey, the researcher investigated perceptions of the two changes among students from a

Chinese university and their effects on students' time management, approaches to test preparation and test performance. The study found that favourable perceptions of students towards the CET were associated with a higher level of engagement in language learning activities and test preparation. Xie (2015) concluded that positive perceptions of the tests among students may be able to promote positive washback. For example, spending more time on listening skills (which had been neglected when scores on that component were given less weight before the change). Meanwhile, favourable perceptions of test may not be able to reduce negative washback effects such as drilling and cramming which are not considered to be desirable language learning activities.

Shohamy *et al.* (1996) reported negative attitudes of students towards the Arabic as a Second Language test. Since it was a low-stakes test and it was of no importance for the students in their graduation from high school and entrance to tertiary institutions, it failed to bring about the intended changes.

Washback studies also reported that students show mixed attitudes towards testing. For example, Cheng (1998) investigated the impact of a public examination change in the existing Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) in English, introduced with the intention of bringing about positive washback effect on classroom teaching and learning. The new examination had adopted an integrated and task-based approach. A questionnaire was designed to explore possible changes in students' attitudes in relation to their classroom activities, practice opportunities and learning strategies. The questionnaires were issued to 1100 Hong Kong secondary School students who took the old HKCEE in 1994 and to 600 students who took the new HKCEE in 1995.

Cheng (1998) found that some of the activities such as reading, writing, practicing grammar items and learning vocabulary were carried out less often in 1995 compared with 1994. On the other hand, some of the activities (such as speaking, group discussion and language games) were carried out more often in 1995 than in 1994, which suggested a match with the requirements of the new HKCEE. However, the study also found that students' motivation and learning strategies remained minimal and they had mixed attitudes towards the new HKCEE: 'On one hand, they [students] did not think examinations were an accurate reflection of all aspects of their study; while on the other hand, they were put in a position in which they had to work hard to achieve the best examination scores possible' (p.296). She concluded that the extent of change was limited due to the mixed perceptions and attitudes of students towards the HKCEE.

In summary, studies have shown that student related factors as well as other factors may mediate washback differently: sometimes in a positive and sometimes in a negative direction. The importance of students' views must be taken into account in the study of washback (Tsagari 2007).

2.4.3 School and classroom factors

Watanabe (1996b) and Wall (2005) divided the factors mediating washback into micro-context factors and macro-context factors. The micro-context factors are the classroom setting and the school (including teacher and student factors) where test preparation is carried out. The class size is one of the factors within the micro-context that may interact with the introduced test to determine its effect on teaching and learning activities. Class size effect was discussed in curriculum innovations in

language education, especially when communicative language teaching methodologies are expected from teachers (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996, Read and Hayes 2003, Wall 2012, Onaiba 2013).

Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996), in the study cited in section 2.3.2.2, found that class size affects teachers' methods of teaching. They found that TOEFL classes were often smaller so that teachers could use pair and group work activities which they thought 'useful and effective in TOEFL classes' (p.294). Onaiba (2013), investigating the washback effects of a revised EFL public examination on teachers' instructional practices in Libyan Basic Education Public schools, also found from data collected through teachers questionnaires, teacher and inspector interviews, and document analysis that 'the bigger the class, the fewer communicative activities are performed by teachers: and hence, a minimum amount of such activities are practiced by learners' (p.79). These studies suggest that when the class size is smaller there will be more chance of pair and group work activities in the classroom.

The grade the teachers teach in a school where a test is administered may also have an effect in determining washback (Alderson and Wall 1993, Shohamy *et al.* 1996). For example, Shohamy *et al.* (1996) reported that teachers who were teaching upper-level students concentrated more on the aspects which were tested than lower-level teachers whose students were not as close to taking the test. Alderson and Wall (1993) also found similar effects that teachers in the upper grade employed more test-oriented instruction to meet the test requirements.

Washback studies also found that the school atmosphere and its cultural factors such as learning traditions also mediate the effects of testing (Watanabe 2000, Wall 2005).

2.4.4 Assessment related factors

The assessment itself is considered as influential in affecting the direction and degree of washback. Some of these factors are discussed in the section below under design and administration of assessment.

2.4.4.1 Design and administration of assessment

Washback studies have found various factors related to the assessment itself to be influential in affecting characteristics of washback: the purpose of the test, the format that the test employs (Shohamy *et al.* 1996), the weighting of the individual papers (Lam 1994), when the test was introduced and how familiar it is to teachers (Andrews *et al.* 2002), the proximity of the test, the stakes of the test, the status of the language it tests, All these assessment-related factors are important in mediating the process of washback (Shohamy *et al.* 1996, Spratt 2005, Wall 2012, 2015).

2.4.5 Macro-context related factors

Macro-context factors are the educational system and the society in which a test is used (Watanabe 2003, Wall 2005). Teachers face external pressure, as students' achievements are often considered to be indicators of teachers' professional success by parents or the media. As a result, these macro-context factors may mediate the effects of testing on teaching and learning activities in the classroom (Cheng *et al.* 2011). Smith (1991) and Shohamy *et al.* (1996) found that the pressure put on to

teachers to achieve intended results by the administrators may also be one of the factors mediating the effects of testing.

Spratt (2005) in her review of washback empirical studies listed as macro-context related factors:

The educational administration – how well messages about the new changes are passed onto teachers and students and how supportive the educational administration is in implementing the change;

Geographical factors – whether facilities like transport and electricity are available, whether schools are located in war affected areas;

Political factors – how much the change depends on politically motivated decisions;

The above discussions on factors mediating the process of washback show that washback is dependent on interplay between various factors.

2.4.5.1 Resources

Empirical washback studies found resources to be one of the factors that influence washback (also Spratt 2005). Some of the resources found to mediate washback are availability of customised materials and exam support materials (Shohamy *et al.* 1996, Watanabe 2000), and textbooks (Cheng 1997, Hamp-Lyons 1998).

In summary, washback studies done in different contexts in language education to date have listed a wide variety of factors which may or may not mediate the effects of testing on teaching and learning. However, they do not consistently show in what directions these factors lead washback, and how these factors affect the

characteristics of washback discussed in section 2.3.2 above. Spratt (2005) concludes that the answer to the question of the direction in which these factors push washback ‘would likely be: it depends’ (p.23). She further argues:

There is also an interaction between the factors and between the factors and the teaching and learning contexts, which is not yet described. The variety of the factors, their varying strength and the complexity of the interactions between them indicate strongly that washback does not always occur and that when it does it may do so in a variety of forms and intensities in different contexts (p.23).

The discussions on factors mediating washback, so far, indicate that there are several factors, such as factors related to teachers, students, test itself and contextual factors, which mediate the effects of testing on teaching and learning activities. However, it is not clear how these factors might interact in different contexts where assessments changes are implemented. Thus, these factors should be taken into consideration in order to recognise whether washback has occurred in a particular context.

2.5 Washback: hypotheses and mechanisms

The previous sections 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 above explained the complexity of washback. It is complex because it influences various aspects of teaching and learning, it can be described in terms of a variety of characteristics, and it is mediated by several factors.

However, clarifying the mechanisms by which washback works and the relationship between these factors in a given context will be useful to understand the complexity of washback. A number of writers have suggested hypotheses or different models to study how washback operates. While the hypotheses suggest aspects of teaching

and learning that might be affected by testing, the models attempt to explain how washback operates.

This section reviews some hypotheses proposed in the seminal work within the field of washback research, and it also reviews frameworks (models) to illustrate and understand the mechanisms by which washback functions in actual teaching and learning contexts. The hypotheses discussed include Alderson and Wall (1993), and the models include Hughes' (1993) trichotomy of backwash model, Bailey's (1996) basic model of washback and Cheng's (1997, 2005) classification of participants at three levels. This section also discusses ideas taken from the innovation literature by Wall (1996, 1999, 2005), in order to explain washback mechanisms. I review the models to identify an appropriate conceptual framework for this research.

2.5.1 Washback hypotheses

Alderson and Wall (1993), in their Sri Lankan study, focused on micro aspects of teaching and learning that might be influenced by assessment change. As a result of their own work and reviewing washback studies in different contexts, they posed 15 hypotheses regarding what is affected by washback (ibid, p.120-21). The hypotheses illustrate areas in teaching and learning that are affected by washback:

- (1) A test will influence teaching*
- (2) A test will influence learning*
- (3) A test will influence **what** teachers teach*
- (4) A test will influence **how** teachers teach*
- (5) A test will influence **what** learners learn*
- (6) A test will influence **how** learners learn*

- (7) A test will influence the **rate** and **sequence** of teaching
- (8) A test will influence the **rate** and **sequence** of learning
- (9) A test will influence the **degree** and **depth** of teaching
- (10) A test will influence the **degree** and **depth** of learning
- (11) A test will influence attitudes to the content, method, etc., of teaching and learning
- (12) Tests that have important consequences will have washback
- (13) Tests that do not have important consequences will have no washback
- (14) Test will have washback on **all** learners and teachers
- (15) Tests will have washback effects for **some** learners and **some** teachers, but **not** for others (ibid: p.120 – 21, bold as in original).

Alderson and Wall (1993), called upon researchers to select from these and to state which applied in their washback research. They also called upon researchers to take account of findings ‘in at least two areas: that of motivation and performance, and that of innovation and change in educational settings’ (p.127), for clearer understanding of the washback phenomenon.

These Alderson and Wall (1993) hypotheses set out which aspects of teaching and learning could be affected by testing. The hypotheses provide us with information of what aspects of teaching and learning and to what extent the aspects of teaching and learning could be affected by testing. These hypotheses are considered as a precursor to more recent theoretical models about washback mechanisms. However, they are not precise and explicit about what constitutes test washback, and do not explain any practical steps and mechanisms through which washback

might be operationalized. They deal only with possible aspects of washback, not with relationships between them (Hughes 1993, Bailey 1996).

As the field of washback research evolved, different researchers proposed models to illustrate the mechanism of washback.

2.5.2 Washback models

In contrast with Alderson and Wall (1993), Hughes's (1993) model in what is sometimes referred to as the 'trichotomy' model, distinguished between participants, processes and products (see Table 2.1 below) in teaching and learning to illustrate the mechanisms by which washback might work in actual teaching and learning contexts.

Table 2.1 Trichotomy of backwash model

Participants	Students, classroom teachers, administrators, and material developers and publishers whose perceptions and attitudes towards their work may be affected by a test
Processes	Any actions taken by the participants which may contribute to the process of learning
Products	What is learned (facts, skills, etc.) and the quality of the learning

(Source: Hughes 1993, p.2)

According to Hughes, participants include students, classroom teachers, administrators, material developers and publishers 'whose perceptions and attitudes towards their work may be affected by a test' (p.2). Process is concerned with 'any actions taken by the participants which may contribute to the process of learning' (p.2), which include materials development, syllabus design, changes in teaching

methodology, the use of learning and/or test-taking strategies, etc. Product refers to ‘what is learned (facts, skills, etc.) and the quality of learning (p.2).

Hughes (1993) explains the mechanism by which washback might work as follows:

The nature of a test may first affect the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards their teaching and learning tasks. These perceptions and attitudes in turn may affect what the participants do in carrying out their work (process), including practising the kind of items that are to be found in the test, which will affect the learning outcomes, the product of the work (p.2).

He notes that an assessment change will first affect participants’ perceptions of the change, and then what they do in response to the change. Finally, it may reflect what the assessment change intended to produce. In this study, teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the assessment change are studied through teacher and student separate questionnaire survey, and what teachers do in response to the assessment change is studied in details through classroom observations. The ‘product’ dimension of trichotomy is not a focus of this study (see Chapter 3 – section 3.3.4).

Hughes’ (1993) trichotomy is useful in discussing the mechanisms by which washback occurs since all three may be affected by the nature of a test, but considering them together may provide a fuller picture of how washback is brought about than a set of disconnected hypotheses.

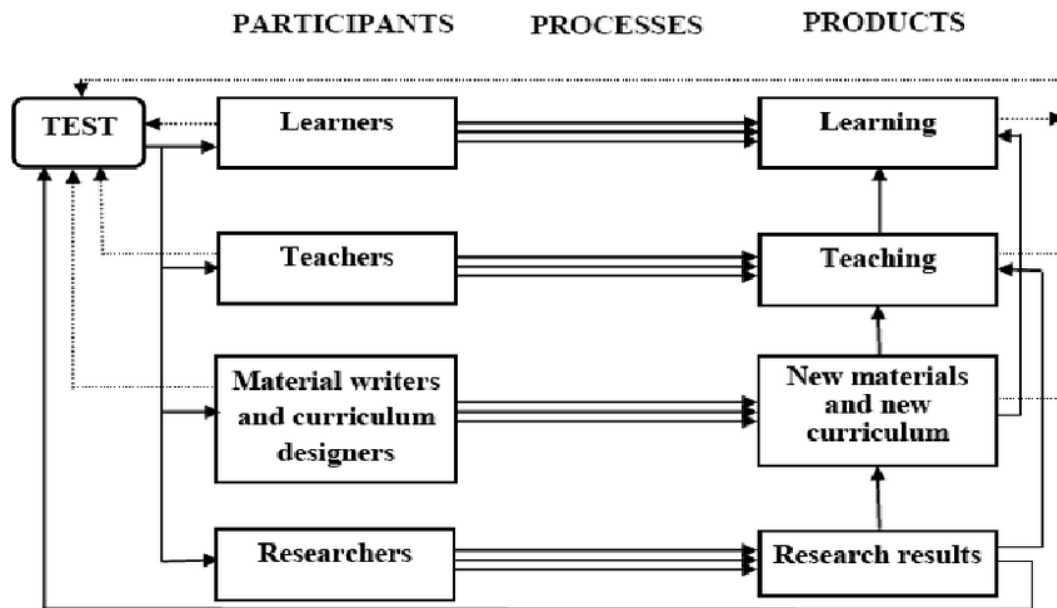
However, since the model does not provide information about the context in which change is implemented and when it is implemented, which are otherwise considered important aspects in understanding curricular innovation and change (Wall 2005), I also follow Wall (2005) (see section 2.5.3 below) in using the information about how to design, implement, and maintain curricular innovation: who (participants)

adopts (process) what (the innovation), where (context), when (the time duration), why (the rationale), and how (different approaches in managing innovation).

Bailey (1996) suggests that the washback hypotheses and the washback models can be combined to examine washback mechanisms. She developed a model of washback to explain the complicated mechanisms of washback (see Figure 2.2 below). An important aspect of Bailey's model is her suggestion that there can be a reciprocal effect as a result of testing: it is not only the test that may affect the products of learning through participants and processes, but that participants and processes may also provide feedback that affects the test. Teachers' attitudes towards an assessment change (Turner 2001), the amount of methodological training in teaching towards a particular test (Andrews 2003), and training in how to use textbooks related to assessment change are mentioned as playing a role in influencing whether washback occurs, how and to what degree.

The model also emphasises the importance of interaction between the different components.

Figure 2.2 A basic model of washback



(Source: Bailey 1996, p.264)

2.5.3 Conceptual framework for the study

In Hughes's (1993) trichotomy, the 'participants' and 'process' dimensions (but not the 'product' dimension) are relevant to the purpose of this study (see Chapter 1 – section 1.6). In the present study, the important participants are teachers and students, and the processes focused on are teaching, learning and assessment activities in the classroom. Specifically, the participants' perceptions of the assessment change and what they do in response to the change are investigated.

Cheng (2005) refines Bailey's (1996) model by separating participants into three different levels: decision-making, intervening and implementing. Cheng (2005) considers the policy makers as decisions agents for the assessment change. The decisions are then disseminated to intervening level participants who publish teaching materials and conduct teacher training. The implementing level participants, consisting of teachers, students, and school administrators are agents

through which the change is actualised in practice. This completes a cycle for the assessment change. Cheng's (2005) division of participants will be used in this present study, since the participants involved in the Sri Lankan assessment change can also be categorised into three levels: decision-making level (policy makers), intervening level (Director of Education (English)/In-Service advisors/Master Trainers) and implementing level (teachers and students) (see Chapter 3 section 3.4.1.1).

Wall (2005) used ideas about curricular innovation which provides detailed information about aspects involved in this innovation process: who adopts what, where (context), when (the time duration), why (the rationale), and how (different approaches in managing innovation). Wall (2005) considers that these aspects are important in order to understand why attempts to innovate through assessment change meet with success or failure. This study considers the ideas that Wall (2005) used in her washback studies taken from the innovation literature, and her suggestions that the abovementioned aspects involved in assessment change should be the focus of the investigation into whether the assessment change has produced effects on teaching and learning activities as intended.

Wall (2005) also used ideas from the curricular innovation literature that suggest that it is important to consider the teaching learning situation and other factors in the educational context that existed before the introduction of assessment change (antecedent conditions). This study has also adopted such an approach as recommended by Wall (2005) in order to investigate the extent of effects the assessment change has had on teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

The hypotheses and models discussed above have informed the theoretical framework for the study. This study will explore and seek to understand what occurs in classrooms as a result of the assessment change in the context of the study. The washback models reviewed above suggest that washback affects participants' attitudes and behaviours and it is brought about through interaction between a test and participants within the educational hierarchy ranging from the policy makers (who have certain washback effects in mind) to the teachers and learners in the classroom, mediated by the trainers, inspectors and materials writers involved in putting policy into practice.

Researchers in the field of language testing incorporated the proposed models and hypotheses to produce their own model to investigate the washback phenomena in a given context. For example, Bailey (1996) combined Alderson and Wall's (1993) hypotheses and Hughes's (1993) trichotomy of the backwash model to propose a basic washback model (see Figure 2.2 above).

2.6 Investigating washback

The empirical investigation of washback is challenging because of the inseparability of washback from most other features of teaching and learning. Messick (1996) states that the difficulty lies on the inability to isolate the washback effect from other ongoing individual and curricular factors. He states:

... washback is a consequence of testing that ... only if it can be evidentially shown to be an effect of the test and not of other forces operative on the educational scene (p.242).

Bailey (1996) agrees that in naturally occurring settings with a non-random sample of subjects trying to develop a true experimental design would be futile and

unhelpful. The tension is between random sampling and non-random sampling, and any attempt to set up a more controlled, experimental investigation would be misguided because of these difficulties. It is, therefore, worth considering how previous washback studies have attempted to find this evidential link between the test and possible effects.

Green (2007b) suggests that ‘a popular approach to investigating washback has been through questionnaire and observation based case studies of participants and processes’ (p.78). Alderson and Wall (1993) also suggest that emphasis should be on classroom observation and triangulation in any washback study. When investigating washback of language tests, Bailey (1996) argues that triangulation would minimally include both teachers’ and students’ perceptions. Messick (1996), on the other hand, advises that the study of washback should include both observing classes and asking the participants about their views and experiences to determine whether teaching and learning are evidentially linked to the introduction and use of the test.

Studies which have incorporated triangulation include those by Alderson and Wall (1993) in Sri Lanka, Watanabe (1996) in Japan, Wall (2005) in Sri Lanka, and Green (2007a) in the UK. These studies compare data collected before and after the implementation of change (Alderson and Wall 1993, Wall 2005), use two or more tests in parallel (Green 2005, Shohamy *et al.* 1996), use two or more participants of the same category (e.g. teachers) to study the effect of a particular test (Watanabe 1996), or more participants of the different category (e.g. participants at different levels with various responsibilities in implementation of the change) (Cheng 2005).

The time factor makes the identification of washback even more complex. The washback effects of a test may undergo changes over time and may not last indefinitely in the system (see section 2.3.2.6 above). Shohamy *et al.* (1996) writes that the question is not only whether washback exists but what kind of washback can be identified at different points in time.

Some of the studies concerning the effects of test on teaching focused on specific tests in specific situations. For example, Cheng (2005) focused on the Hong Kong Certificate of Education in English, Wall (2005) on the Sri Lankan O level Evaluation Project and, Green (2007a) on IELTS. On the other hand, some reviews, for example, by Bailey (1999) and Spratt (2005) have had a broader aim to discuss test effects comparing several washback studies to find a conclusion of the effects of testing. All of these studies suggest that high-stakes tests will influence teaching but where they differ is in the form this influence will take. The research studies and review studies so far done on the effects of test on participants, process and product of teaching and learning highlighted the complexity of the impact situation, and how many factors needed to be taken into account before it might be possible to say that a specific test has had a specific effect on a specific context.

These discussions show the importance of empirical evidence in investigating the effects of a high-stakes test in context. This present study will examine the washback effect of the change in the system of assessment on teaching under the ELSP, focusing on teachers' and students' attitudes and perceptions and teachers' behaviours towards the new system.

2.7 Washback in the Sri Lankan context

In sections 2.1 – 2.4 of this Chapter, I have discussed the effects of testing on different levels of the education system and on various aspects of teaching and learning from theoretical perspectives. Since the call for empirical evidence of washback on teaching and learning by Alderson and Wall in 1993, the various effects of testing on teaching and learning, and on individuals have been studied in various contexts (see sections 2.3 and 2.4 above). This section focuses on one major washback project carried out by Wall (2005) within the Sri Lankan context that addressed a change to the O level English examination.

This section reviews Wall's (2005) study in detail because the context of this present study is in common with Wall's (2005) study, and Wall's (2005) study is considered as a landmark study in the field of language testing. It is also of value because it employed a mixed methods approach (including several rounds of classroom observations). The mixed methods approach is considered as important to study a complex phenomenon like washback (see Chapter 3 – section 3.3.3).

Wall and Alderson (1993) carried out washback studies in the Sri Lankan educational context on the revised Sri Lankan O level English Examination (hereafter referred to in this section as the new test), and accounts of aspects of the study can also be found in Wall (1996, 1999, and 2005).

The new test, introduced in 1989, was meant to include all four skills through centrally designed and marked test for reading and writing, and teacher designed school based assessments for speaking and listening (Pearson 1994, Wall 2005).

Wall (2005) explains that:

The new examination was originally meant to assess all four language skills: reading and writing via pen-and-paper examination at the end of Year 11, and listening and speaking through continuous assessment during Years 9, 10, and 11. It was believed that if all four skills counted towards the final result then teachers and students would pay them equal attention. These plans were short-lived, however: the continuous assessment was abandoned in 1989, for political as well as logistical reasons, and with it went all hopes of assessing listening and speaking (p.109).

Thus, the original plan to test all four skills in the new test was abandoned and finally limited only to reading and writing skills.

The following section is based mainly on Wall (2005), which provides the fullest account of the project.

2.7.1 Purpose of the study

Wall's (2005) study – the Sri Lankan O level Evaluation Project – was a longitudinal study, which was jointly conducted by a research team over a period of 4 years. The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether the new test, which was intended to provide 'a lever for change' (Pearson 1988, p.101), had created any effects in the classroom as it was originally intended to reinforce the textbooks both in terms of content and methodology.

2.7.2 Research design

Wall's (2005) study was composed of several sub-projects including a baseline study conducted in 1988, before the implementation of the new test. The baseline study investigated the antecedent conditions (how the teaching practices looked like before the changes in textbooks and examinations were made) and implementation factors operating in the context of change. Then, an observation programme was

carried out in 1990-1991 during the final stages of the Sri Lankan O level Evaluation Project, after the examination was first administered in 1989.

Based on the data, Wall (2005) discussed the change in terms of textbooks and examination, the user system (classrooms, schools, the educational administration, and the broader political and economic situation), and the users (the teachers and students) and how these characteristics either promoted or inhibited the intentions of the policymakers. Wall (2005) also distinguished between effects on content in teaching for the new examination and effects on teaching methodology based on the observational data. Based on the assumption that the teachers observed and interviewed were not influenced by the new test before its implementation, and the observed changes after the implementation of new exam could be attributed to the effect of the new test. However, Wall's (2005) assumption, that the teachers involved in the baseline study (conducted in 1988, only one year before the new test introduced in 1989) were not influenced by the new test, had no evidence to prove her assumptions. However there were preparations such as pre-service and in-service teacher training, developments of new textbook series, before the new test had been introduced, and Wall (2005) noted that 'Teachers received an official orientation to the examination in May 1988, approximately six months before it was due to be administered for the first time' (p.8). This might suggest that the teachers might have influenced at least to a certain extent by the new test.

Taking the importance of investigation of antecedent conditions into considerations, the present study investigated how the teaching practices looked like before the changes through interviews with participants at the intervening level (see Chapter 4 – section 4.4).

2.7.3 Research methods

Wall (2005) investigated the effects of the new test on teachers, who were teaching in secondary school, through various methods. In earlier stages of the project, *document analysis* was done for finding out the aims of the English Language Teaching (ELT) reform programme and the examination development activities. *Questionnaires* were employed in order to find out how teachers, teacher advisors and examiners were reacting to the examination.

Wall (2005) then conducted *classroom observations* employing an observation team that consisted of 7 English teachers who conducted 6 rounds of classroom observations in a total of 49 schools across the country, except the North and Eastern provinces.

The observation team used *interviews* before teachers taught their lessons in order to establish what materials the teachers were intending to use and how they intended to use them. Then lessons were observed to establish whether the teaching was influenced by the new test, and ‘... to find out whether the hoped-for features did in fact appear in the classroom (p.109). The teachers were interviewed again after the lessons, to find out why they had decided to teach in the way they had and to find out whether the new test was influencing particular aspects of teaching. *Group interviews* were also conducted to explore teachers’ attitudes towards the new test; whether they liked the new test or had any negative opinions.

Wall (2005) also employed *materials analysis* with the aim of finding out whether the exam had had any influence on teacher-made tests.

2.7.4 Theoretical framework

Wall (2005) criticised the washback research at the time for a narrow focus on factors such as the characteristics of teachers and students, classroom conditions, management practices, status of the subject being tested, all or some of which may play a part in determining why teachers react to tests in the way they do. However, Wall (2005) stated that specialists in language testing had not paid enough attention to factors such as references to the context in which changes were to be introduced, the available resources to support the implementation of the changes, and the way that changes should be managed, and these factors are considered important to manage changes at a national level.

Wall (2005) suggested that findings in at least two areas such as motivation and performance, and innovation and change in educational settings should be taken into account in order to understand how washback works. The understanding of innovation process in different educational settings helps us to know how washback works, and the various factors which promote or prevent the implementation of change.

Wall (2005) used Henrichsen's (1989) hybrid model of the diffusion/implementation process which explains about three key components in innovation – antecedents, process, and consequences – to analyse the effects of new test on teaching and learning in Sri Lanka. Wall (2005) suggests that two elements of the antecedent component – characteristics of the context/user system and of the participants/intended users – are important for two reasons; '[The two elements] serve not only as the foundation upon which new practices will be laid but will

continue to influence the innovation in the second part of the model, the Process' (ibid, p.83). Wall (2005) explains that analysing the message, the plans and strategies, the channel of communication, and factors influencing the change process are important in the process component of Henrichsen's (1989) model. Wall (2005) also explains that the third component – consequences – is important to decide whether the consequences of the change are as intended or unintended.

In this present study, the theoretical framework of Wall (2005) is considered along with Henrichsen (1989), Watanabe (1996b), Wall and Alderson (1993) and Spratt (2005) to discuss some of the mediating factors in relation to the context of the study (see section 2.4 above).

2.7.5 Findings

Wall (2005) re-analysed the original data, which were collected during a four year period (1988 – 1991) of the Sri Lankan GCE O level Evaluation Project, based on literature in the field of language education and educational innovation, and they were used as points of comparison for the findings, from the evidence collected by a combination of observations of classroom teaching, group interviews with teachers, and questionnaire data.

Wall (2005) found that washback occurred in both positive and negative forms, to some degree, in teaching content, but not in teaching methodology. In her study, teaching content refers to '[T]he type of knowledge that teachers were trying to transmit to their students (e.g. the form of a specific grammar structure, or facts relating to a particular topic), or to the general skill they were focusing on (e.g. reading, listening)' (Wall 2005, p.18), whereas teaching methodology refers to 'the

general approach the teachers adopted (e.g. grammar-translation or ‘communicative’) or the specific techniques they used’ (ibid). She cites the following examples as teachers’ methodological choices: translation of passages from English into students’ mother tongue, reading aloud, encouraging students to refer for certain information in certain sources and spending less time on reading a text for a particular purpose.

The new test had an effect on the teaching content (what the teachers teach) of English lessons, that is, the curriculum was narrowed to those areas likely to be tested. The teachers worked their way carefully through all the exercises on reading and writing skills, but there seemed to be little teaching of listening and speaking (It should be noted that the new GCE O level English examination was limited only to reading and writing skills – see section 2.7 above). In contrast, the test had little to no effect on teaching methodology (how they teach) in the classroom. It was teacher-centred and exam-like with test-taking practice and routine correction in students’ written exercises, but no discussion of the problems that students were facing in completing the exercises on reading and writing skills.

Wall (2005) found that teachers relied on the textbooks for their content of teaching, but not for their method of teaching. Most of the teachers did not understand the teaching approach or the principles of communicative language teaching encouraged in the textbook. She explained that it was mainly due to teachers’ lack of understanding of the approach and philosophy in handling the textbook which the new test was based on, and teachers’ lack of understanding of the new test.

Wall (2005) also found that teachers spent more time on reading and writing skills, which were the two skills tested in the O level English examination, but did not pay equal attention to listening and speaking skills, which were not tested.

Wall's (2005) study found that factors in the setting other than the new test itself – familiarity with the test, teachers' beliefs about effective teaching and learning, availability of resources such as textbooks, and the wider social context – also affected the success of the intended changes.

Wall (2005) found the existence of a strong washback effect, both positive and negative, in the way teachers and local officers designed their classroom tests. The teachers used techniques such as short-answer questions, true/false questions, and matching in reading and writing skills which were not used by teachers before the new test came in.

Wall (2005) stressed the need for complementary data from other sources in washback studies. The classroom observations alone were not enough to explain the complex washback phenomenon, but complementary data such as classroom tests prepared by teachers, and follow-up interview data after classroom observations were important for better understanding of washback.

The observations were of value in that they revealed many areas where examination impact might be occurring. However, they did not establish a causal link between the examination and the type of teaching that was being observed. It is therefore necessary to gather other types of information before definitive claims could be made about the impact of the examination (p.114).

Wall (2005) conducted group interviews with teachers in addition to classroom observations to claim evidence of a logical or evidential link (Messick 1996), between the teaching and learning and the new test. To establish the evidential link,

Wall (2005), first, investigated the conditions prevailed in the education system prior to the new GCE O level had been implemented in Sri Lanka. Second, she investigated the changes through questionnaire survey, classroom observation and interview after the implementation of the new test for the purpose of establishing the link between the changes and the new test.

2.7.6 Recommendations and guidelines

Based on the innovation literature and her own research, Wall (2005, p.280-3) made a number of recommendations and guidelines for those who want to introduce changes through testing as a strategy to improve educational practices:

1. It is important to analyse antecedent conditions, in order to understand whether the intended changes will be accepted by the institutions and participants and how much change should be accommodated in the system. *A priori* studies should also be done during the early stages of implementation of educational changes to establish whether the effects of testing occur as intended or whether any adaptations are needed. This information is also important to decide on whether the intended changes have occurred.
2. It is important to consult representatives of all the stakeholders in any new project including policy makers, administrators, pre-service and in-service teacher trainers, and students. Even though, teachers are important stakeholders who are the implementers of change in the classroom, direct communication with students rather than what teachers' think of their students is essential.

3. Assessment change may be necessary for change in curriculum, but assessment change itself is not sufficient for intended changes to occur. The environmental considerations beyond the assessment itself determine the intentions of curriculum change. Therefore, analysis of the environment into which the innovation is being introduced is important in deciding whether changes have been achieved as intended. Curriculum change would not survive if there had not been a careful analysis of environment into which the changes are introduced and also careful monitoring is also important as time went by.
4. Policy makers and others should not expect changes to occur as they intended. They should understand that assessment change itself cannot cause positive effects on teaching and learning activities unless the materials and teaching and learning practices are effective.
5. Planning of teaching and learning materials and teacher training activities should be done at the same time as the test design.
6. Teachers change their content of teaching without much difficulty in a test reform but they find it difficult to change their method of teaching and their beliefs about what is right and wrong in teaching.

Wall (2005) hoped that these recommendations and guidelines would provide useful guidance for policymakers who wished to introduce changes in teaching and learning activities through testing.

In this present study, Wall's (2005) recommendations are used to investigate the effects of the assessment change on teaching and learning activities. Representatives of stakeholders at three levels are involved in the process of

collecting data on various aspects of the assessment change. Interviews are conducted with intervening level participants to investigate what teaching and learning looked like before the implementation of the assessment change. The steps taken in support of the implementation of assessment change are also taken into consideration: teacher training, teacher guide and changes in curriculum. The content of lessons and method of teaching are also a focus in this study.

2.7.7 Contributions and limitations of Wall's study

Wall's (2005) study was highly influential in washback research, and it made significant contributions to the understanding of the complex washback phenomenon. However, the study had some limitations owing to the design and context of the study.

2.7.7.1 Contributions

Wall's (2005) study used innovation literature in her research to propose ways of exploring the complex aspects of washback by:

- Providing an operationalized model for researching washback;
- Providing practical guidelines for the planning and management of change within an educational context;
- Pioneering a mixed methods approach to washback research.

The points in the practical guidelines above offer some explanation of why the new test failed to bring about the expected changes in particular aspects of teaching in Sri Lanka.

For example, Wall (2005) highlighted the importance of the contextual factors for teaching and showed that an understanding of this context could help to explain the failure of the reform to bring change in the Sri Lankan English Language Education.

For example, although there was the anticipation that the test would bring changes in how teachers teach, it was found that no relationship was found between the methodology that the teachers used and the methodology recommended in the textbook. The methodologies observed in class did not seem to be relevant to the skills that were needed for success on the new test.

Wall (2005) explained these discrepancies by referring to features of the context. These included teachers' lack of command of communicative teaching techniques and misunderstanding of the basic principles of the textbook.

This is an indication of the importance of the social context beyond the assessment itself in determining the intentions of curriculum change. In this regard, it is important to state that the present study focuses on the effects of assessment change on teaching within the ELSP, where a special training (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5) and a teacher guide with resource material (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.3) were given to teachers in assisting their communicative teaching of speaking. Given these training and resources were available to the teachers.

It will be of interest for the present study to find out whether the methodology that the teachers use in their speaking classes are as intended by the policy makers by providing more class time for student-centred activities in the classroom.

A number of writers have observed that investigation of a complex phenomenon such as washback needs a holistic approach covering both classroom settings

(micro-level), and social settings (macro-level) (Messick 1989, Bachman and Palmer 1996, Cheng 2005). Wall (2005) pioneered and employed such an approach – observation of classroom teaching activities and interviewing people such as textbook and test designers – to investigate the effect of the new test.

2.7.7.2 Research gaps

Although Wall's (2005) study has been highly influential, it was not without research gaps. They included:

- Lack of direct student participation: students were not directly involved to obtain their points of view about the test;
- No test of Speaking was included. It is considered as a limitation (even though it was not a weakness of the research design – discussed in detailed below) because one of the important findings of Wall's (2005) study was that the new GCE O level examination had no effects on teachers' methodology. However, it might be a different finding if speaking was included in the new test;
- Lack of baseline evidence regarding classroom activities and teaching methodologies. It was not clear whether speaking was focused on before the implementation of the new test. If speaking was focused, there might be a change in teachers' methodology when compared with teaching other skills (reading, writing, and listening);
- Geographical restrictions: participants from a particular geographical area in Sri Lanka were not involved in the research.

Wall (2005) obtained students' views about the new test through their teachers, acknowledging that: 'It was not possible during this project to elicit students' views directly, however, it was possible to analyse what the teachers had to say about their students and to find out connections between these descriptions and the ways in which the teachers managed their teaching' (p.232).

Other washback studies have shown that students' attitudes, motivations, learning styles, and learning strategies are important factors in mediating washback, and students should be directly involved in providing their perceptions and understanding of an assessment change and associated teaching and learning activities (Bailey 1999, Wall 1999, Cheng 2005, Wall and Horák 2006, Tsagari 2007), since these may not be what their teachers believe them to be (Wesdorp 1982, Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996, Perrin 2000, Lumley and Stoneman 2000, Tsagari 2007).

Another short-coming of the study, although beyond Wall's (2005) control, is that it did not include a test of speaking. In fact, the new Sri Lankan O level test was meant to include all four skills (Pearson 1994). In 1986, the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka decided to conduct a centrally designed and marked reading and writing English examination for GCE O level, and a series of teacher designed and assessed school based assessments (SBA) which would focus on listening and speaking.

Unfortunately, as Wall (2005) explained, the SBA component was subsequently withdrawn without any official reasons and the centrally designed written paper became only means of assessing students' English.

It was against this background, that Wall (2005) found in her study that speaking was not focused on in the lessons observed and the new GCE O level examination had no impact on teachers' methodology. She suggested that teachers' limited focus on speaking might be explained by the fact that the textbook devoted more units to reading and writing than speaking. On the other hand, the influence of the new test could be the reason for the teachers' relatively greater focus on reading.

However, it was not clear whether there might have been a change in teachers' methodology if speaking had been a focus.

Wall (2005) argued that it is important to analyse not only the pedagogic practices, but also to analyse geographical factors, an important element in the characteristics of the user system in washback studies. However, Wall (2005) explained that prevailing unrest in a particular geographical area in Sri Lanka (the Northern and Eastern part of Sri Lanka) prevented teachers from those areas from participating in the research.

This study will try to address some of the issues identified in Wall's study.

It will include students as important participants whose perceptions and understanding of the assessment change – testing speaking at the national and school levels – are gathered through a questionnaire survey (see Chapter 3 – sections 3.3 and 3.4.1.3).

The present study focuses on speaking as a key communicative skill since Wall's (2005) study found that speaking was not focused on by teachers who prepared students for the new GCE O level examination which did not include a speaking test. I try to find whether the policy makers' intentions that testing speaking at two

levels – the school level and the national level – has encouraged teachers to focus on speaking skills in their classroom teaching activities and whether the decision to test speaking has any effects on teachers' methodology.

This study will obtain detailed information on the extent to which teachers focused on speaking activities before the introduction of speaking assessments through interviews with participants at the intervening level. This will enable me to compare whether the decision to test speaking has any effects on teachers' focus on speaking.

While Wall (2005) was unable to include the Eastern part of Sri Lanka in her study, this study focussed on the Eastern region of Batticaloa. However, this study did not have the level of resources of Wall's project, which was funded by the British Overseas Development Administration and had two teams involved in the project (a team from Lancaster University and a Sri Lankan team), it could not cover the whole country.

2.7.8 Summary of Wall's study

Wall's (2005) study was conducted with the purpose of finding whether the intentions of the policy makers to innovate through testing was realistic. However, the study showed that many other factors than the test itself need to be taken into consideration to explain why the effect of testing took the form it did and why it did not match with the intended changes. The study also showed that testing has the potential to change teaching, but that testing alone is not sufficient. For example, testing cannot influence teachers' practices if they are not committed and do not have the skills to make adjustments to the change. The conditions in the classroom,

the schools, and in the educational system should also be supportive of the teachers so that teachers will experiment with change.

In this present study, I consider Wall's (2005) recommendations and guidelines which suggest factors taken into consideration when conducting research on washback (see section 2.7.6 above), on the other hand I also try to address some of the limitations of Wall's study (see section 2.7.7.2 above) in my study on evaluating the effects of speaking assessment on teaching within the English as a Life Skill Programme introduced in Sri Lanka.

2.7.9 Implications of Wall's study

The study provides useful guidelines to educators who wish to introduce changes in teaching and learning through assessment change. The study suggests that there should be appropriate conditions in place in classrooms, schools, local systems and in educational administration for an innovation through test reform to be realistic.

Wall's (2005) work in Sri Lanka suggested that factors beyond the test might influence the intended changes and Wall (2005) further explained that innovations would not survive unless there had been a careful analysis of the environment into which the innovations were introduced, and careful monitoring was also important as time went by.

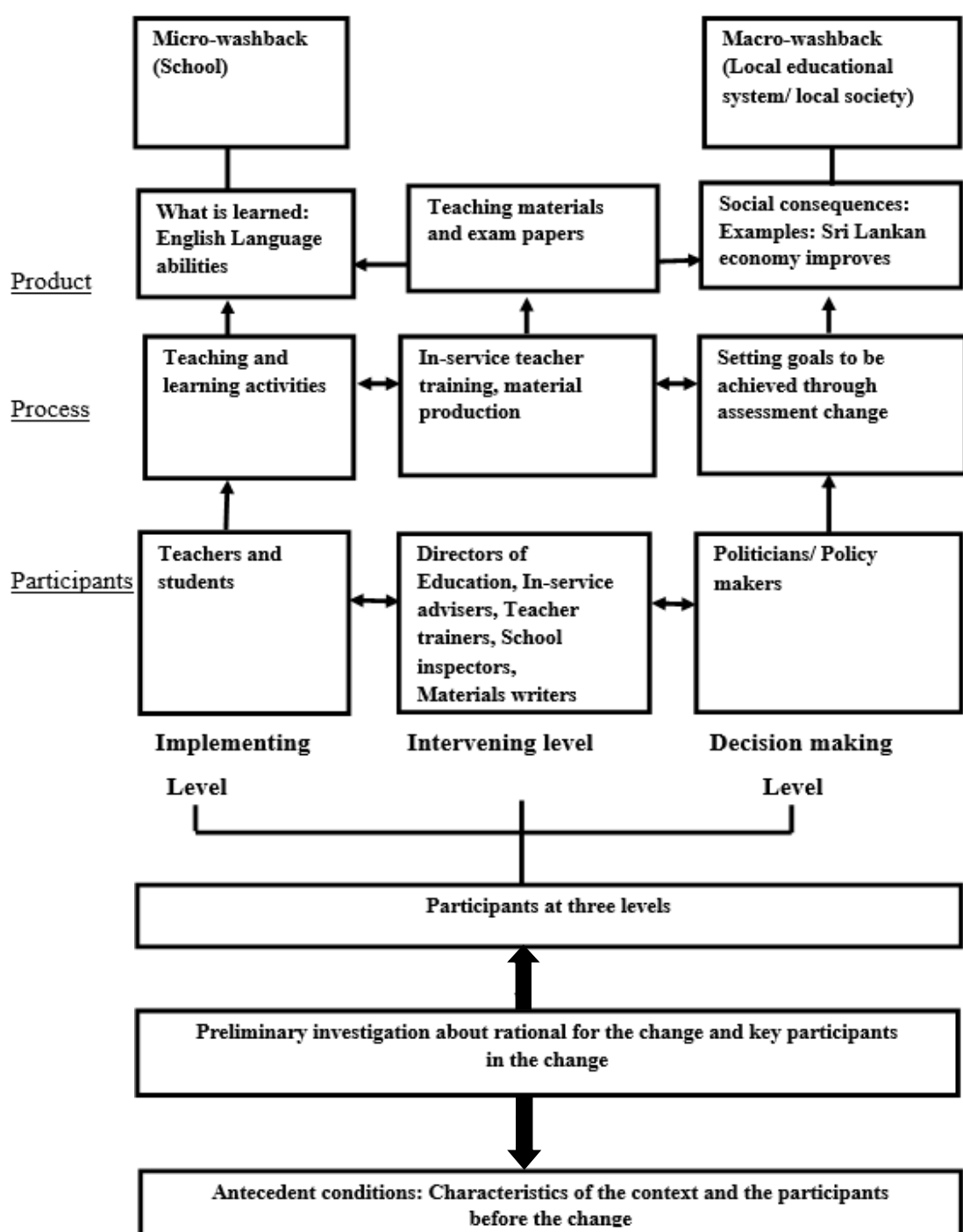
Wall (2005) drew conclusions from the findings of the study about the test's effects in the Sri Lankan context, and the implications of this study for other educational settings. Wall (2005) pointed out the importance of carrying out investigations about educational settings before implementing any change, in order to find out how much change the particular educational setting will accommodate. Wall (2005)

further explained that these investigations should be repeated in order to find out whether the test is having the effects as intended or whether there is a need for adjustments in the test itself or setting where the test is implemented.

2.8 Summary of the Chapter and a Framework for the study

This Chapter has reviewed washback from several perspectives: the concept itself, the characteristics of washback, the factors mediating the process of washback being generated, the mechanism of this phenomenon, the investigation of washback, and washback in the regional context of this study. Through exploring the theoretical and empirical literature, I propose a conceptual framework that brings together Alderson and Wall's (1993) hypotheses, Hughes's (1993) trichotomy of washback, Bailey's (1996) basic model of washback along with Cheng's (2005) idea of participants at three levels and Wall's ideas of a baseline study to investigate the antecedent conditions (see section 2.7.2 above).

Figure 2.3 A proposed model of washback



The model illustrates that the initial impetus for any washback effects comes from the assessment change, which is the result of policy stipulation at the decision-making level. The changes are then passed onto teachers and students at the implementing level through participants at the intervening level. The assessment change, as suggested by Hughes (1993), first affects teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes. The change in attitude will then in turn be reflected in what they do in the classroom in response to the assessment change. Finally it will be reflected in the learning outcomes.

It should be noted that participants and processes at each level including the assessment itself are influenced by various mediating factors (see section 2.4 above). These factors may mediate the process of washback being generated. For instance, teachers' education and training; school atmosphere and cultural factors; class size (see sections 2.4.1.3 and 2.4.3 above).

The proposed model will be helpful in this study for exploring how stakeholders at different levels within the Sri Lankan educational system reacted when the assessment change was introduced. It provides a means for exploring whether the changes that have occurred in teaching and learning have come about in the way intended by those who framed the assessment policy. The baseline study of the antecedent conditions (i.e. what the teaching practices looked like before the assessment changes) also provides a basis for comparison with teaching practices after the change.

From the literature, it can be seen that assessments, as a lever for change, have been used in many contexts to drive teaching and learning. However, the literature

suggests that the relationship between testing, teaching and learning is more complicated than it appears on the surface. The review of the literature has also suggested that high-stakes tests have had effects on some aspects of teaching and learning and have affected stakeholders differently.

The review also indicates that tests do not always bring about the changes intended by the policy makers. Unintended changes might occur because of a number of intervening variables operating in different educational contexts. Thus, we may not be able to predict the characteristics of washback effects on teaching and learning activities in a particular context unless a thorough investigation is carried out.

The present study is therefore characterised not only by the investigation of the existence of washback, but also by the attempt to establish reasons for the existence or non-existence of washback as intended by the policy-makers.

The studies reviewed in this chapter indicate that the effective investigation of washback requires a mixed methods research approach reflecting its complexity, and the methodologies adopted should be chosen according to the nature of inquiry, the researcher and the context.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This research was carried out when a public examination change had been introduced in the Sri Lankan education system in 2011 with the intention that the testing of speaking would encourage more teaching of speaking skills in the classroom. Although policy makers clearly intended the change to have positive washback effects, it was not clear how teachers and students understood and valued the change, how the change would actually influence the classroom teaching, and what aspects of teaching might be affected, and whether the changes that would actually occur would be as intended. This research examines the effects of the new system of assessment on educational practices in the light of the new arrangements for assessing speaking to find out whether effects had occurred as intended and how and why they had occurred.

This Chapter begins with a statement of the research questions, followed by a description of the research design that steered the methodological processes for this study, and outlines the preliminary investigation of the educational context where the assessment change was introduced. This Chapter then explains in detail the methodological processes including the selection of research samples, the research methods (semi-structured interviews, questionnaire surveys of both teachers and students, and classroom observations) employed and details of the collection and analysis of the data. It then presents the ethical considerations followed by approaches to the triangulation of data used to answer the research questions.

3.2 Research questions

The research considered the roles of three levels of participants in the Sri Lankan education system (see section 3.4.1 below) – Level one (decision making), Level two (intervening), Level three (implementing) – in the process of translating policy intentions into classroom actions.

The overall research question is:

Does the new system of assessment of speaking within the English as Life Skill Programme have washback on teaching and learning processes, and on participants in teaching and learning?

The overall research question is sub-divided into three main questions:

3.2.1 Research Question One: Intervening level

Are there any gaps between the participant's intentions at the decision making level and the intervening level participants' understanding of the assessment change? More specifically:

- In the context of the change within the English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP), are the intentions of the participant at the decision making level understood by the participants at the intervening level?
- How do these participants at the intervening level see their responsibilities in the context of the new ELSP?
 - How do these participants report that they act to implement the ELSP policy?

- Do these participants believe that they are well supported by resources to fulfil their responsibilities?

Research Question One addresses possible gaps in how intervening level participants translate messages about policy from the Level one down to the classroom teaching level (Blumer 1986, Cheng 2005). The intervening level (Level two) referred to in Research Question One includes In-Service Advisors, (ISAs), Master Trainers (MTs) and Assistant Directors of Education (English) (ADEs) (see section 3.4.1 below).

3.2.2 Research Question Two: Implementing level

Do the teachers and the students (implementing level – level three – participants) share the policy makers’ and the intervening level participants’ perceptions of the introduction of the National Test of Speaking and School Based Assessment of Speaking? More specifically:

What are the teachers’ perceptions of the (washback) effect on their teaching activities and their students’ learning activities of the:

- a. Proposed National Test of Speaking?
- b. School Based Assessment of Speaking?

The aspects investigated include teachers’ perceptions of:

- The rationale and formats of the new system of assessment;
- The use of the National Test of Speaking and of School Based Assessment of Speaking as part of the system of assessment;

- The teaching methods, content, and speaking activities in the;
 - a) English Pupil's Textbooks.
 - b) English Pupil's Workbook.
 - c) Teachers' Guide- Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English.
- The factors influencing the choice of the speaking activities used in the classroom;
- The 80 hour Teachers' Training conducted by the Master Trainers of English;
- The English as a Life Skill Programme that was telecast on the National Rupavahini Television;
- How far the school environment supports the teaching of speaking;
- The difficulties involved in teaching speaking in the classroom;

What are the students' perceptions of the (washback) effect of the:

- a. Proposed National Test of Speaking on their teachers' teaching activities and their own learning activities?
- b. School Based Assessment of Speaking on their teachers' teaching activities and their own learning activities?

The aspects investigated include students' perceptions of:

- The medium of instruction;
- The teaching activities related to National Test of Speaking and School Based Assessment of Speaking;
- Reasons for learning speaking;
- Use of National Test of Speaking and School Based Assessment of Speaking as part of the system of assessment.

Research Question Two addresses how teachers and students reacted to the changes made in the public examination system and to explore the nature and the scope of the washback effect in terms of teachers' and students' perceptions. The implementing level (Level three) referred to in Research Question Two includes teachers and students (see Section 3.5.1.1 below).

3.2.3 Research Question Three: Implementing level

What are the observable washback effects of the National Test of Speaking and School Based Assessment of Speaking on teachers' instructional practices?

In answering this question, I also address the following subsidiary questions:

Are these effects consistent with:

- a) the effect intended by the policy makers and;
- b) what the teachers have said about their perceptions of the effect of the National Test of Speaking and School Based Assessment of Speaking?

Teachers' classroom practices investigated include the following aspects:

- Teachers' medium of instruction;
- Teacher talk;
- Teaching activities (participant organization/ content/ student modality);
- Materials used for teaching and learning activities;
- Aspects of lesson planning;
- Assessment and evaluation in relation to their teaching.

Research Question Three covers the nature and the scope of washback on teachers' classroom practices within the context of the change in the system of assessment.

3.3 Research design

A preliminary investigation was carried out to build a clear understanding of the assessment change (see section 3.3.1 below). The preliminary investigation was also helpful in informing the design of the study. It became clear that it was important to understanding the washback process to identify consistencies and gaps between participants at different levels in translating messages about policy (Cheng 2005) (*Research Question One*). Any gaps between participants in translating messages about policy could moderate the impact of the changes in policy on teaching and learning activities in the classroom (Cheng 2005).

The key rationale for the introduction of the speaking test was that testing speaking would encourage teachers to focus more on teaching speaking and hence learning (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5). This study therefore investigated teaching and

learning in depth. A test may first affect perceptions and attitudes of the participants, and then may affect what participants do (Hughes 1993). Therefore, I set out to collect teachers' and students' perceptions of and attitudes towards the change and gauge the extent to which different participants shared in these perceptions and attitudes (*Research Question Two*). However, participants' perceptions and attitudes of how they have been affected by a test can be contextualised only through direct observation of behaviour in the classroom (Wall and Alderson 1993, Green 2007a). I therefore also set out to observe teachers' instructional practices in the classroom, relating this to the intentions of the policy makers (*Research Question Three*).

A number of other factors also influenced the design of the study. These factors included implications of previous washback studies – baseline studies to investigate the antecedent conditions (Wall 2005); the fact that investigation of washback is challenging because of difficulties lie on the inseparability of washback from other aspects of teaching and learning (Messick (1996); and practical constraints including time, finance and participants' consent to take part in the research.

3.3.1 Preliminary investigation (Exploratory approach)

The first objectives of the preliminary investigation were to build a clear understanding of the rationale for the change and to identify the key participants involved in this change by investigating the educational context where the new system of assessment had been implemented. Green (2007a) stresses the importance of more ecologically grounded understanding of the change:

It is therefore important to gain ecologically grounded understandings of how a test operates within an educational context, rather than (or in addition to) seeking to isolate the effects of testing in experimental fashion (Green 2007a, p.30).

Therefore as a preliminary step, before establishing the research questions, I directly engaged in the local context and spent time to understand the implementation of English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP) in its specific social context. Collecting information about the change given in various electronic and printed media and discussions with people who were directly involved in the change ('watching' and 'asking') (Green 2007a) helped me to understand the rationale for the change and to identify the key participants and also to identify documents related to the change to be reviewed.

3.3.2 Research methodology adopted

The review of the empirical studies shows that it is important to investigate the effect of a test within the teaching and learning context under which it operates. In this study, the investigation would be carried out by 'asking' (Green 2007a) teachers and students about their attitudes and perceptions of the test, and by 'watching' (Green 2007a) classroom teaching and learning through observation sessions.

The school is the crucible of any change in the curriculum and teachers are the principal agents of change (Fullen 1991). Since, washback requires a context based study of change in relation to the assessment component, and classroom teaching in relation to the characteristics of individual teachers and students, observation could be employed to see and experience the changes in their natural settings (Cheng 2005).

Green (2007a) also stressed the importance of ecologically grounded understanding of how an assessment change operates within a particular educational context.

It is therefore an empirical investigation of the assessment change in Sri Lanka is important to find out whether changes have occurred in teaching and learning and whether the changes occurred as intended.

Messick (1996) makes the important point that the conclusion that washback has occurred can only be supported if there is a clear evidential link between observed effects and the test.

[E]vidence of teaching and learning effects should be interpreted as washback ... only if that evidence can be linked to the introduction and use of the test (p.243).

The above discussions on research methodology adopted in washback studies show that the context where a new test is introduced and evidence to link the observed effects and the test need to be taken into consideration in washback studies.

It also indicated that a study of this nature needs to be carried out at different levels within the particular educational context by employing various research methods (Alderson and Wall 1993, Cheng 2005, Wall 2005, Green 2007a) (see section 3.3.3 below).

3.3.3 Mixed methods research approach

The washback literature shows that the complexity of washback necessitates the use of mixed methods approach (Creswell 2009, Cohen *et al.* 2011) to understand ‘why the teachers do what they do’ (Wall and Alderson 1993, p.62). Mixed-methods approach combines two or more (qualitative and quantitative) methods (Howe

2004). The main rationale for the mixed methods research approach was based on the complex nature of washback effects and the need to record a variety of participants' attitudes, perceptions and behaviours in response to assessment change in washback studies in the field of language education (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996, Bailey 1999, Wall 2005, Green 2007a).

Washback studies, to date have been based on a variety of methods such as surveys, interviews, testing measures, classroom observation and document analysis for data collection. The different methods (whether qualitative or quantitative) are different tools for answering questions; qualitative methods refer to what kind, and quantitative methods to how much of a kind.

Some of the washback studies used a single method to record the washback effects. For example, Hughes (1988) used test scores and Hamp-Lyons (1998) used document analysis. However, Bailey (1999) argues that it would be difficult to explore washback with data collected through a single method. For example, she suggests that only the self-report responses to the questionnaire is useful but it is insufficient for the understanding of washback in full, and a combined approach by eliciting participants' view and observing is essential for this type of exploratory studies.

In similar vein, van Lier (1989), Bailey (1999), Wall (2005) also suggest that in order to understand the nature and scope of such a complex phenomenon like washback, not only an observation of teaching and learning but follow-up interview is necessary. Classroom observations inform us of what is really happening in the

classrooms. Follow-up interviews are important to answer why the teachers do what they do.

Since the washback literature underlines that a single method does not do enough to cover the complexity of washback effect, I use a mixed methods approach to gain different perspectives to address the identified research questions of the study. This approach employed both eliciting participants' views and self-reporting of behaviour, and observing teaching and learning to document the effects of tests on teaching and learning. This also enables cross-checking the validity of data collected from different sources or participants, and via different methods or instrumentation.

3.3.4 Variables focused on in the study

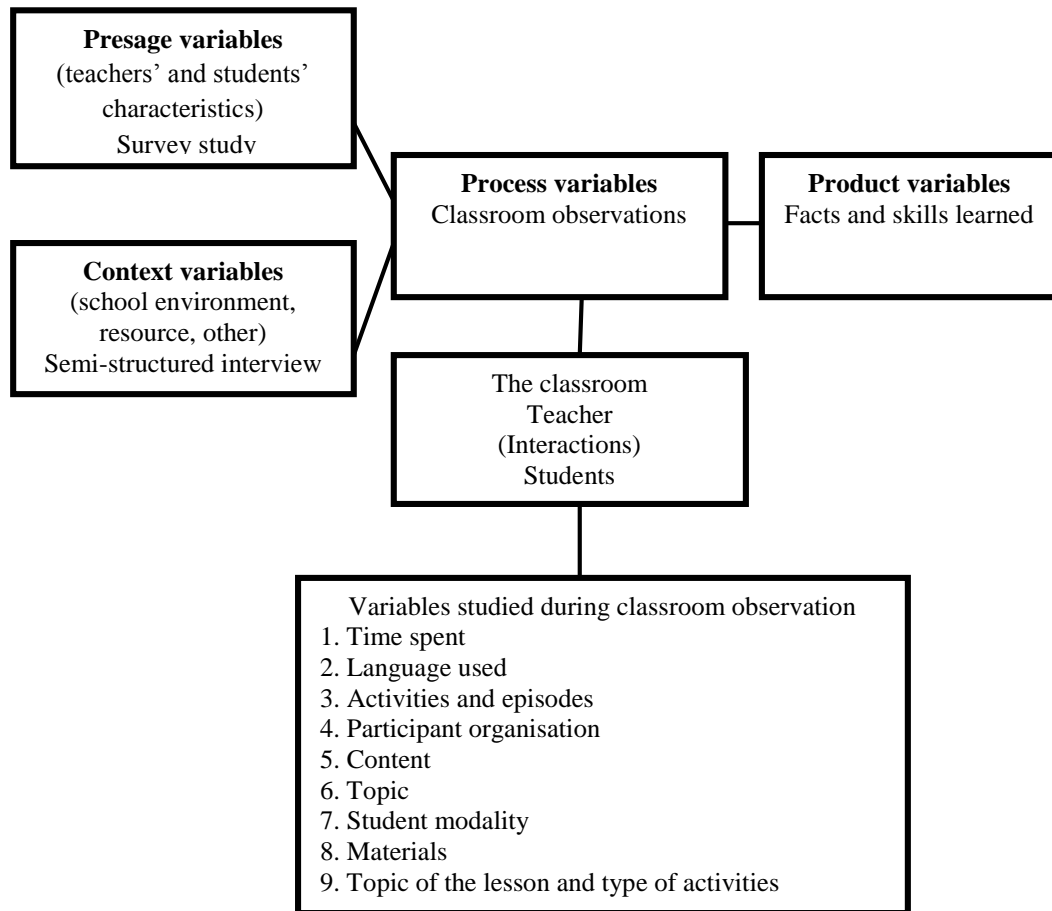
This study focuses on the presage, context and process variables. Presage variables are the characteristics of teachers: their own formative experiences, and teachers training, and the characteristics of students (Stern 1983), and the context variables are the features of the settings within which the teachers and students operate – the community, the school and its environment. The process variables are the interactions between teacher and students.

Context variables are studied through semi-structured interviews with participants at the intervening level (Research Question One), and the student and teacher characteristics as presage variables are studied through a separate teacher and student questionnaire (Research Question Two). The process variables are studied through observation of classroom processes, review of teacher lesson plans, and

interviews with teachers following observation of classroom teaching and learning activities (Research Question 3).

The presage variables and the context variables influence washback effect of an assessment change on teaching and learning activities in the classroom (process variables) (Cheng 2005) (see Figure 3.1 below). Therefore, this study focuses on the following variables: presage variables of teachers and students, the context, and the process, but not product variables (see Chapter 2 – section 2.5.2). Product variables are not considered since this research mainly focuses on the effects of the assessment change on teaching and learning activities, but not on what is learned and the quality of learning.

Figure 3.1 Variables focused in the study



(Source: Cheng 2005)

Figure 3.1 above illustrates the different types of variable which influence the washback effect of an assessment change.

3.4 Research sampling

Sampling techniques are equally important as methodology and instrumentation to a research study. Cohen *et al.* 2011 write:

The quality of a piece of research not only stands or falls by the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted (p.143).

They also suggest that there are five key factors taken into consideration before selecting samples for research purposes:

- Sample size;
- Representativeness and parameters of the sample;
- Access to the sample;
- Sampling strategy to be used;
- Kind of research whether quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods.

The whole population cannot usually be involved in a research study since factors such as expense, time, and accessibility frequently prevent researchers from involving them. Therefore care should be taken in selecting a smaller group or subset of the total population which should be representative of the total population under study. When writing about how large a sample (size) should be Cohen *et al.* (2011) suggest:

There is no clear-cut answer, for the correct sample size depends on the purpose of the study, the nature of the population under scrutiny, the level of accuracy required, the anticipated response rate, the number of variables that are included in the research, and whether the research is quantitative or qualitative (p.144).

Probability (random sampling) and non-probability (purposive sampling) are two methods of sampling in research studies. It is the decision of researchers to choose either of them or both of them to suit the specific purpose of defined research objectives (Cohen and Holliday 1982, 1996, Schofield 1996).

In probability sampling every member of population under study has equal chance to be selected, but this is not the case in non-probability sampling. In non-probability sampling, it is the *deliberate and purposeful* decision of researchers to include or exclude individuals drawn from a particular section of the wider population.

Non-probability purposive sampling (Cohen *et al.* 2011) provides greater depth, but less breadth to the study than probability random sampling. Purposive sampling was chosen to access people who have in-depth knowledge about a particular issue by virtue of their professional role, power, expertise or experience (Ball 1990). In the case of this study, participants who directly involved in the decision making about the change, and participants who involved in passing the decisions to the implementing level, and participants who implemented the changes were selected for the purpose of data collection (see section 3.4.1 below).

I opted for non-probability purposive sampling for this research for the following reasons:

- Access to stake holders who are directly involved in the new change;
- To overcome factors such as expense and time which prevent access to research participants and to research locations;
- To select people who are willing to participate in the research.

3.4.1 Sampling of participants

The research participants in this study were selected to represent the different levels within the Sri Lankan education system: decision-making level, intervening level and implementing level (see Table 3.1 below).

Table 3.1 below shows the participants at different levels, what type of data were collected and research methods applied for data collection.

Table 3.1 Research participants at three levels and methods of data collection

Level	Participants	Data collected about	Research Methods applied
Level 1 (Decision making)	Director/ Department of English/ National Institute of Education/ Ministry of Education	Rationale of the change. What is expected to be achieved by the change and how?	Semi-structured interview Relevant document review
Level 2 (Intervening)	Assistant Directors of Education (English)/ Zonal Education Office In Service Advisors (English)/ Zonal Education Office Master Trainers/ Zonal Education Office	Whether there are any gaps in translating policies. Teaching and learning activities before and after the change.	Semi-structured interview
Level 3 (Implementing)	Teachers of English School students	Teachers' and students' perception of the change Teaching and learning activities in the classroom	Teachers' and students' survey questionnaire Classroom observation, follow up interview, and analysis of lesson plans

3.4.1.1 Decision-making level participants

Participants who had authority to take decisions regarding implementation of change represented the decision making level. Even though this is referred to as the decision making level, it should be noted that people at this level had no authority to set new policies, but rather monitored and reported the progress of the change – the implementation of the School Based Assessment (SBA) and National Test of Speaking (NTS) to the Ministry of Education. They could make suggestions to the Ministry of Education and be influential in possible changes (such as changes to the curriculum, teacher training, and publication of teaching and learning materials) but policies were set at the political level.

Samaraweera, the Director of the Department of English, National Institute of Education (NIE) in Sri Lanka was the participant at the policy making level in this study. He was also the co-ordinator for ELSP with responsibilities including conducting the NTS. He was included as a participant in this research, since the detailed and latest information about the ELSP could be obtained from him (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5).

The NIE was responsible for developing English syllabuses for school system, training of teachers, in-service advisors and Assistant Directors of Education. It was also responsible for the development of the Teacher Guide (Resource material for teaching spoken English) specially prepared for teaching speaking skills under the ELSP.

One participant from the decision-making level was involved in the study for getting information such as the rationale for the change and identifying key

participants in the change. However no participants from the decision-making level were included in the main study, but were consulted only in the exploratory and pilot stages of the project. Because the collected information such as the rationale for the change, the key stake holders in the assessment change, and the intended changes to be achieved was sufficient for the research purpose, no-one from the decision-making level was considered for the final study.

3.4.1.2 Intervening level participants

The intervening level participants come in between the decision making level and the implementing level (teachers and students). The Assistant Director of Education (English) (ADE) is the person-in-charge of teaching and learning activities and assessment of English for a particular zone. The In-Service Advisors (ISAs) of English and Master Trainers (MTs) of English come under the direct supervision of the ADE.

ISAs visit schools to monitor the teaching and learning activities of English in the classroom and provide suggestions to the teachers. They monitor whatever lessons are taught in the classroom when they visit schools. Their visits are unannounced. They also pass down information about policy decisions such as dates of examinations, in-service teacher seminars and training to teachers on their visit.

Master Trainers are specially trained to monitor the implementation of teaching and learning activities and SBAs of speaking skills.

In-service Advisors and Master Trainers have regular meetings with the ADE to discuss workshops, seminars and teacher training that they feel important to

teachers in their teaching and learning activities. Intervening level participants pass information and policy related matters to the next, implementing level.

The intervening level participants for this study were selected from all four zones (see Table 3.2 below). They included Assistant Directors of Education (English), In-Service Advisors, and Master Trainers. In a particular zone, depending on the number of schools, there will be one Assistant Director of Education (English), and under his purview, there will be one or more In-Service Advisors, and Master Trainers.

Table 3.2 Selection of intervening level participants for the study

Name of the Zone	Number of Participants			Total
	ADE	ISA	MT	
Batticaloa	1	1	1	3
Batticaloa Central	-	1	1	2
Kalkudah	1	1	1	3
Pattiruppu	1	1	-	2

A decision was made to involve one participant each from the four zones with different official responsibilities in the implementation of speaking assessments under the ELSP. However, note there was no Assistant Director of Education (English), appointed in Batticaloa Central (his/her duties were performed by a senior In-service Advisor in the zone), and there was no Master Trainer in Pattiruppu (his/her duties were looked after by another In-service Advisor) due to shortage of suitable candidates.

3.4.1.3 Implementing level participants

Teachers and students are the participants who implement the policy change in the classroom. I focussed on students in their GCE O level year (Grade 11) because the NTS was planned to be introduced first to the GCE O level students, and then to other grades. The O level examinations administered to students at the end of Grade 11 is considered to be a high-stakes national test. It is a matter of prestige for teachers and school principals that their school should perform well on this high stakes test to maintain a good reputation, and for students that their performance in the GCE O level is a decisive factor in their future academic and professional career.

Previous washback studies suggest that the effect of a test on teaching depends on various factors such as the stakes of the examination and also varies from one individual to other (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996, Watanabe 1996, Burrows 1998, Cheng 2005, Wall 2005, Green 2007a, Green 2007b). Green (2007a) reviews washback studies conducted by many researchers in the field of language testing and concludes:

A common finding has been that individual teachers bringing different experiences and beliefs to the classroom respond differently to tests (p.19).

In other words, a particular test may influence teachers differently even when they work in the same school, where facilities and any student factors that might affect teaching and learning are likely to be more or less equal. As such, the choice of participants may affect the outcomes and must be carefully considered if results are to be generalisable. Taking heed of this, I sampled teachers and their students preparing to sit for the GCE O level from three different types of schools (see Table 3.3 and section 3.4.2 below).

Table 3.3 Selection of teachers and students from one of the four zones

(Table 3.3 below illustrates selection of participants from only one of the four zones. There were four zones selected in this study).

Name of the Zone	Batticaloa												Total
Type of schools	National				1AB				1C				03
Number of schools and school code	BCO/NS/VI		BCO/NS/CC		BCO/1AB/HI		BCO/1AB/CE		BCO/1C/AN		BCO/1C/AR		06
Number of teachers and teacher code	BCO/NS/VI/X	BCO/NS/VI/Y	BC/NS/CC/X	BCO/NS/CC/Y	BCO/1AB/HI/X	BCO/1AB/HI/Y	BCO/1AB/CE/X	BCO/1AB/CE/Y	BCO/1C/AN/X	BCO/1C/AN/Y	BCO/1C/AR/X	BCO/1C/AR/Y	12
Number of students	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	120

Table 3.3 above shows that four teachers from the same type of schools were selected in this study making 12 teachers in total from a particular zone.

In total, there were 48 teachers – 12 from each zone – and 480 students – 120 students from each zone – selected for this study.

3.4.2 Sampling of Schools

There are three types of government schools in Sri Lanka. They are National schools, Provincial schools and Pirivenas (schools for Buddhist priests). There are also small numbers of non-government schools such as private schools and international schools. Private schools and Pirivenas follow local curricula, and participate in national examinations while international schools follow their own curriculum and examination system.

Only schools which come under Central Government and Local Governments (i.e. National schools and Provincial schools) were considered in this study. Pirivenas, private and international schools account for just 9% of the Sri Lankan school population among the total number of 9731 schools (Ministry of Education, 2004). There were no Pirivenas and Private schools and just three international schools located in the area where the research was conducted. Since the international schools did not follow the government curriculum, they were also not considered in this study.

Central Government and Local Governments each have responsibility for different types of school. National schools are funded and administered by the Ministry of Education of the Central Government. They are well established and are widely regarded as élite schools since they have a rich history and generally have better maintained facilities than other schools. Provincial schools are controlled and funded by Local Governments, but some important responsibilities are retained by the Central Government, such as designing the common curriculum for all schools, introducing major reforms in education and conducting high stakes examinations.

Provincial schools make up the large majority of schools in Sri Lanka and they suffer from relatively poor facilities and shortages of teachers (Dorabawila *et al.* 2002).

Sri Lankan schools are classified by the government based on several factors including administrative authority, functional grades, whether classes are conducted at the advanced level in Science, Commerce, Arts or a combination of them (Ministry of Education and Higher Education 1996). Dorabawila *et al.* (2002) explains that classification of schools also depends on the available facilities and performance at high stakes examinations. Schools are ranked from National schools (at the highest level) to Type 3 schools. There are 25 districts within the nine provinces in Sri Lanka. Some National, 1AB, and 1C schools in the Batticaloa district within the Eastern province in Sri Lanka are selected in this research (see Table 3.4 and section 3.4.2.1 below).

Table 3.4 Description of types of government schools in the Batticaloa district

District	Regional location (Zones)	Administrative authority	Types of schools	Description of schools with their functional grades
Batticaloa	Batticaloa (BCO) Batticaloa Central (BC) Kalkudah (KAL) Patturuppu (PAT)	Central Government	National schools	Type 1AB and /or Type 1C schools (see below)
		Provincial councils	Type 1AB	Schools having advanced level Science, Commerce and Arts stream classes
			Type 1C	Schools having advanced level Arts and / or Commerce stream classes but no Science stream classes
			Type 2	Schools having classes from Grade 1 to only up to Grade9 or in some schools up to Grade 11
			Type 3	Schools having classes from grade 1 to only up to 8 or Grade1 to 5

(Source: Ministry of Education and Higher Education 1996)

Table 3.4 above illustrates the basis on which schools were classified into different types.

3.4.2.1 Selection of schools by school type

All four zones namely Batticaloa, Batticaloa Central, Kalkudah and Pattiruppu were selected in the Batticaloa district except Batticaloa West because it was a newly set up zone which was badly affected by war in Sri Lanka, and there were no National schools and 1AB schools found in this zone.

The selection procedure of schools within each zone was the same for all four zones. That is, two national schools, two 1AB schools and two 1C schools were selected, as discussed above (only one of the four zones was explained in Table 3.3). Two schools for each of the same type were chosen for comparison purposes. There were 24 schools in total selected in this study.

Type 3 schools do not offer Grade 11 classes and Type 2 schools usually do not offer Grade 11 classes. Even when they do, they may lack the parallel Grade 11 classes needed for comparison purposes according to the research design. For this reason, Type 2 and Type 3 schools were excluded from the study: only the National, 1AB, 1C schools were selected.

Although ideally it might have been revealing to have included schools from across the country, the research design called for frequent meetings with the participants (especially with the teachers) to probe their understanding of the research problem. Since internet communication was not freely available either to the officials or to the research participants and correspondence by mail is slow and unreliable, I had to visit the research participants in person to ask for their permission and consent. Effort was also made to recruit the same participants (whenever possible) to take part in the questionnaire study, classroom observation and follow-up interviews. For practical reasons of this nature, the geographical area of the research was narrowed down to a single region: the Batticaloa district.

It was important to include a range of school types in the study, because the differences among schools with regard to available facilities to implement the change in the classroom were not the same in each zone. It was also not clear how

washback would occur in Sri Lankan schools of different types that consist of students of higher and lower levels of proficiency in English and how teachers in different types of schools would react to the change. The empirical and review studies of washback suggested that the differences among schools and participants may be a significant factor in the implementation of policy changes (Cheng 2005, Spratt 2005, Wall 2005), and schools with disadvantaged students are sometimes found to be affected by the adverse effects of public examinations (Herman and Golan 1991).

Therefore, a range of school types from different geographical locations (zones) were included in the study.

The study focused on teachers who taught in GCE O level in the National, 1AB and 1C schools and their respective school students at the selected schools in the Batticaloa district. Although it might have been useful to include larger numbers of participants, factors such as time, financial, technological and resource constraints prevented this. For instance, the researcher had to get permission from several hierarchies in the education system before involving participants (especially school students) before the potential research participants themselves could be asked for their consent to participate in the research.

I followed non-random deliberate purposive sampling (see section 3.4 above) in selecting the participants and each of the participants was contacted by personal visit to ask for their consent to participate in the research and to elaborate about the research and its objectives.

Two schools of the same type were selected for teacher and student questionnaire survey. This meant that teachers working in the same type of school could be compared to probe differences between teachers working with similar students, but in different schools. Within each school, two teachers were selected. This allowed for the identification of similarities and differences between teachers working with students in the same school and grade but with different classes of more or less equivalent size and ability. Such classes are termed ‘divisions’ in Sri Lanka and are given names such as (Grade 11A/11B/11C etc.). The number of divisions depends on number of students in a particular grade. The policy-stipulated class size should be 35-40 students.

3.4.3 Sampling of teaching and learning materials

A Teacher Guide- Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English- (containing modules for enhancing the language skills of the teachers and also activities which was specially prepared under the new change (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5) in addition to the English Pupil’s Book Part 1/Part 11 (the books contain materials and activities for teaching and learning grammar and for reading, writing, speaking and listening and they are issued free of charge) and workbook (this book contains only activities for grammar and for reading, writing, speaking and listening and it is issued free of charge), which were already being used (see Table 3.5 below). The teachers were expected to use activities from both materials in their teaching and learning activities. They were also expected to adopt or modify the lessons and activities to suit the needs of the students. In his message to the Teacher Guide Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English, the Director, Department of English, National Institute of Education writes:

By having this [Teacher Guide] as a guide, the teachers can use their own intuition and creativity to make similar tools which would add variety and also give an opportunity for the teachers to think and be creative, which is seen as a vital aspect that should be provided for the teachers of English... (Atugoda 2010, p.xvii).

The teacher and student questionnaires were used to find whether teachers used activities from all these teaching and learning materials.

Table 3.5 Teaching and learning materials

Name of the Material	Published by	For whom	Purpose
English Pupil's Book – Part I/ Part II (already being used before the change)	Educational Publications Department/ Ministry of Education	Government School Students – Grade 11	Provides materials and activities to the teacher to make use of in order to see learning takes place effectively.
English Workbook (already being used before change)	Educational Publications Department/ Ministry of Education	Government School Students – Grade 11	Provides major language learning activities
Teacher Guide – Resource Material for Teaching spoken English- “English as a Life Skill” (specially prepared after the change)	Ministry of Education	Teachers of English	Includes modules for enhancing the language skills of the teachers and activities for students to develop oral skills.

Table 3.5 above shows the different types of teaching and learning materials and summarises the various purposes of the teaching and learning materials provided to teachers and learners by the Ministry of Education (see Appendix 19 for a few pages of speaking activities from the teaching and learning materials).

3.5 Data collection instruments

The research instruments for this study were based on the suggestions made by washback researchers (see section 3.3.3 above). The complexity of washback implies that more than one factor needs to be considered at a time (Wall and Alderson 1993, Bailey 1999, Spratt 2005, Green 2007a). What teachers think about and what they do in the classroom is important in this washback study. This necessitated a range of research instruments to capture the views and behaviours of different participants. The research instruments adopted for the research purposes were semi-structured interview with a participant at the decision-making level (N=1), semi-structured interview with participants at the intervening level (N=10), teacher survey questionnaire (N=48), student survey questionnaire (N=480), and classroom observations with follow-up interviews with teachers (N=12) (see Table 3.6 below).

3.5.1 Purpose of each research instrument

The semi-structured interviews with participants at the decision making level were conducted to build a clear understanding of the rationale for the change and to identify the key participants involved in the implementation of the intended changes from policy level to classroom level.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants at the intervening level to explore whether the intentions of policy makers were understood by the participants at the intervening level, and to understand what teaching and learning looked like before the change had been introduced.

The teacher questionnaire was employed to explore teachers' perceptions of the (washback) effect of the new system of assessment of speaking on their teaching activities, and the purpose of the student questionnaire was to explore their perceptions of the (washback) effect of the assessment change on their teachers' teaching activities and their own learning activities.

Finally, the purpose of the classroom observation was to record the observable washback effects of the assessment change on teachers' practices and to examine whether these were consistent with the effects intended by the policy makers.

Table 3.6 below provides a summary of the data collection instruments and their purposes. In the following sections, I will discuss in greater detail how each data collection instrument used in the main study was developed and used.

Table 3.6 Data collection instruments

Data collection instruments	Mode of recording the data	Purpose	Sources contributed to the development of theme for data collection instruments
semi structured interviews with participants at the decision making level	responses audio recorded	to understand; the rationale of the change who the stake holders are and their responsibilities what preparations are in place to implement the change	exploratory study theoretical and methodological review of literature
semi structured interviews with participants at the intervening level	responses audio recorded	to observe any gap in translating messages about policy from the top level (decision making level) down to the classroom teaching level (implementing level)	type of research questions peer group discussions
questionnaires to teachers at the implementing level	written response	to understand how the teachers reacted to the change and to explore the nature and the scope of the washback effect on aspects of teachers' perceptions.	trialling of tools
questionnaires to students at the implementing level	written response	to understand how the students reacted to the change and to explore the nature and the scope of the washback effect on students' perceptions	
classroom observations and then follow up interviews with teachers at the implementing level	recorded on a prepared observation scheme	to observe the washback effect of the change on different aspects of teaching and learning	

3.6 Semi-structured interview with intervening level participants

3.6.1 Introduction

There are various forms of interviews which are different tools that the interviewer may choose among, depending on the purpose of inquiry, kind of knowledge sought, interview participants, and personal skills and style of interviewer. One form of research interview is semi-structured interview, which the present study employed to interview participants at the intervening level. Semi-structured interviews allowed for two-way communication between the researcher and the participant. They also provided the flexibility to explore the participant's answer in greater detail when needed (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

This section first discusses the purpose of the interview, and then explains the interview procedure, including how it had been developed over the pilot and the main study. Finally, it provides an account of how the analysis of interview data was conducted.

3.6.2 Purpose of interview

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was explorative in nature. For example, for an interview question; 'Could you please explain about the focus of speaking skill before the assessment change?', when the participant responded 'speaking was not focused'. I would ask the participant for further details such as the reasons for speaking was not being focused, or to compare focus of speaking with other skills, etc., until I felt that the participant had provided enough information to answer the research questions.

I chose semi-structured interviews, since a small number of participants would be involved in the interviews (see section 3.4.1.2 above), and semi-structured interviews would produce more in-depth information about the change than other methods. I opted for semi-structured interviews for another reason, that it would help me to decide the sequence and working of questions in the course of the interview from the topics and issues to be covered specified in advance. However if I had chosen structured interviews, the respondents must fit their experience into the researcher's categories which might have limited their response choices.

3.6.3 The interview procedure

Based on the preliminary investigation and literature review, an interview schedule was prepared with an outline of the themes to be covered with suggested questions. The interview was then piloted with a small number of participants (Assistant Director of Education (English) (ADE) – 1, In-Service Advisor (ISA) – 1, and Master Trainer (MT) – 1) at the intervening level from a particular zone. This was conducted in 2012, after the ELSP was introduced in 2011. The purpose of piloting was to trial the interview schedule with a sequence of interview themes and suggested questions for the main study. The piloting procedure also ensured that the participants understood the interview items as intended by the researcher and understood as much as possible in the same way by every participant (Cohen 1976, Cohen and Manion 1989).

After the piloting interviews, the interview questions were modified such that they were in a descriptive form to elicit factual descriptions from interview participants (e.g. Could you please compare the classroom situation before and after the

implementation of change as far as teaching and learning of speaking skill is concerned?) rather than to get their own, speculative explanations of why something took place (e.g. Do you think the change in the classroom situation as far as teaching and learning of speaking skill is concerned because of the implementation of change?). Since the descriptive form of interview questions would bring more information about the assessment change, it was used in the interview.

The main study was carried out with 10 participants (ADE – 3, ISA – 4, MT – 3) at the intervening level from all four zones (see Table 3.4 above). This was conducted in 2013.

At the beginning of each interview, the purpose of the interview and ethical issues were explained. The participant was given an information sheet, and then asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for information sheet, consent form and the interview schedule for ADE, ISA and MT respectively used in the main study).

Although there was an interview schedule with a set of interview questions, I did not strictly follow the order of questions in the schedule. At times, I had to rearrange the order of the questions to follow-up the participants' answers, and rephrase the questions if the participants found them hard to interpret. I had to make on-the-spot-decisions about what to ask and how, which aspects of a subject's answer to follow – up and which not; which answers to comment on and interpret and which not. I asked for – clarification of their responses – whenever I felt that their responses did not contain enough information to answer the research questions.

The interviews were audio recorded for later analysis. The recording of the interviews freed me to concentrate on the topic and the responses of the participants. It also provided me with time to decide on whether the responses needed further clarification or to go for the next question. If I had opted for note taking in recording data, I might not have been able to concentrate on participants' responses and to follow up their responses, but might have had to strictly follow the interview schedule. I had also made sure that the place was quiet and without much disturbance when the recording was done. Sometimes, the recording went past the expected time limit agreed upon already since some participants had to say more about a particular topic. In cases where the participants were busy, I had to continue the interviews at some other time with the consent of the participants.

3.6.4 Analysis of interview data

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, but hesitations like 'mm's were not noted in the transcriptions.

The analysis began with reading through the interview transcripts several times to get an overall impression, and then specific words, statements and passages were identified to gain understanding about the participants' different attitudes to the change under investigation.

Then, coding of interview statements according to the themes which had been developed before the interviews was carried out, taking into consideration the research questions to be addressed in this study. Coding involved attaching one or more keywords to a text segment in order to permit later identification of the statement (Charmaz 2005, Gibbs 2007). The coding of a text's meaning made it

possible to reduce long interview statements into a few themes. Categorising the interview statements into themes helped me to gain an overview of large amounts of transcriptions, and facilitated comparisons between interview participants.

In accordance to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggestions, the interview transcriptions were sent to the participants for their review, to check whether the statements in the transcriptions were what they had said at the interview.

Then, attempts were made to generate meaning of statements under each theme. In meaning interpretation, I looked beyond what was directly said about the themes and not immediately apparent in the text.

In Chapter 4, I present the findings from the semi-structured interviews.

3.7 Survey method

3.7.1 Introduction

In washback research, questionnaires have often been used as the main data collection instruments (e.g. Cheng 1998 – student questionnaire, Xie and Andrews 2012 – teacher questionnaire), or used in conjunction with other methods (e.g. Tsagari 2009 – teacher interviews, student diaries, and document analysis). Questionnaires have several advantages, such as providing structured numerical data which are relatively straight-forward to analyse (Wilson and McLean 1994). They are also quicker to code and analyse than word-based data (Bailey 1994).

This section describes the questionnaires used in this study. The section presents the development of the questionnaires used in the pilot study, and then the changes

made to both the teacher and the student questionnaires used in the main study. Finally, it presents the main study data collection procedures and analysis.

3.7.2 Development of the initial questionnaire

The pilot study began with the development of an initial version of the teacher and the student questionnaire. Themes such as antecedent conditions (what the teaching, learning and assessment activities looked like before the change), teachers' and students' characteristics, and teaching, learning and assessment processes (see Figure 2.3) for the pilot questionnaires were based on theoretical derivations from related empirical washback studies reviewed in Chapter 2, and on themes emerging from the preliminary investigation where the researcher watched and learned about the rationale and the objectives of ELSP from people involved in the change (see section 3.4.1).

Taking account of various factors such as the size of the sample, the nature of the research questions, expense, time and accessibility (Cohen and Manion 1989, Cohen *et al.* 2011), the questionnaires (teacher questionnaire and student questionnaire) included both closed and open items. For the closed items, a series of questions and statements were presented and the respondents were asked to choose from among the response options. For the open items, space was provided for the respondents to answer as they wished.

3.7.3 Pilot study stage of questionnaire survey

3.7.3.1 Pilot teacher questionnaire survey

The pilot questionnaire was administered to a small number of teachers (12) and students (120) from three types of school (see Table 3.7 below). This was conducted in 2012, immediately after the ELSP was introduced in 2011. The aims of the pilot questionnaire were to:

- obtain preliminary data on teachers' perceptions and understandings of the new system of assessment and their attitude to the change.
- collect data to finalise a questionnaire which could answer the research questions posed in this study.
- validate the questionnaire items.

The first few items on the pilot teacher questionnaire gather some background information about the teachers. The remainder of the questionnaire consists of questions related to possible attitudinal and behavioural changes connected with the English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP) reform that they had noticed in their own teaching activities and the students' learning activities. Apart from the items on background information about the teachers, other items in the questionnaire were designed on a five-point Likert scale with space at the end of each question where the teachers could further elaborate on their responses. The option for teachers to add these written responses was intended to obtain qualitative input for deeper understanding of their attitudinal and behavioural changes under the new system of

assessment. These responses offered more information which might be useful in the construction of the main study.

The 12 teachers were invited for expert views also referred to as ‘cognitive interviews’ (Cohen and Manion 1989), and sometimes referred to as ‘thinking aloud procedures’ (Cheng 2005) about the various aspects of the questionnaire including the content and question wording in order to determine whether the questionnaire items were understood as intended by the researcher and whether they were understood in the same way among the teachers themselves. The teachers were invited for separate discussion since it involved practical difficulties to bring all of them together to a particular place at a particular time. However, it was not possible to interview students to obtain their points of view about the test, and it was one of the difficulties arose in accessing the research setting (see Chapter 7 – section 7.4.1).

The piloting procedure ensured, as far as possible, that all survey participants understood the questionnaire items in the same way (Cohen *et al.* 2011). The piloting procedures were important not only for reliability purposes but also served the purpose of finding tentative answers to the research problem. It should be noted that the date for the National Test of Speaking was not finalised when the pilot study was held in 2012: only the School Based Assessment of Speaking had been implemented. The teachers were in a state of confusion as to whether the National Test of Speaking would be conducted in the year 2012 or would be postponed. However, after the continued postponement, the Sri Lankan government declared in 2015 that the NTS was to be postponed indefinitely (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5).

Table 3.7 Sampling of teacher and student questionnaire survey for pilot study

Geographical location		Batticaloa District						Total
Administrative division		Zone						
Types of school		National school (NS)		1AB		1C		
Number of schools		1	1	1	1	1	1	06
Number of teachers	Class division A	1	1	1	1	1	1	12
	Class division B	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Number of students	Class division A	10	10	10	10	10	10	120
	Class division B	10	10	10	10	10	10	

3.7.3.2 Pilot student questionnaire survey

At the same time as the pilot teacher questionnaire, a student questionnaire was administered to one hundred and twenty students. The students were selected from the same schools as the teacher participants (see Table 3.7 above). The aims of the initial questionnaire were to:

- obtain preliminary data on students' perceptions and understandings of the new system of assessment and their attitude to the change;
- collect data to finalise a questionnaire which could answer the research questions posed in this study;
- validate the questionnaire items.

The student questionnaire first collected some background information about the students, the rest of the items were related to possible attitudinal and behavioural changes connected with the English as a Life Skill Programme reform: changes that students had noticed in their own learning activities and their teachers' activities in the speaking classes. Some questionnaire items were designed such that the students could tick one or more statements that applied. Other items in the questionnaire were based on a five-point Likert scale with space at the end of each question where the students could elaborate on their responses.

3.7.4 Changes made to survey questionnaires after piloting

Following the pilot study, I reviewed the questionnaire to note any potential problems, such as possible misinterpretation of ideas that the participants could make, and difficulties in understanding certain technical terms in the questionnaire, when it would be administered to the participants (Brannen 1992, Bryman 1992). Then, research colleagues were invited to complete the questionnaire and to comment their views on the various aspects of the content and construct of it. They were also expected to comment on any potential difficulties in analyses of data to be collected and amount of time it would take to complete the questionnaire. These procedures helped to shape and to validate the questionnaire.

The piloting of the initial questionnaire and classroom observations with follow-up interviews with the teachers and further review of literature of relevant washback studies also contributed to finalising the themes for the final questionnaire.

A number of adjustments and modifications were made to the pilot questionnaire items before the main study. The main changes made to the questionnaires are discussed below.

3.7.4.1 Changes made in the teacher questionnaire

Initially, the questionnaire was separated into Part 1 (demographic information) and Part 2 (attitudinal and behavioural data related to the new assessment of speaking). It was pointed out during a discussion with my research colleagues that since the questions had been numbered in order, it would be better not to separate the questionnaire into different parts.

During the cognitive interview, one of the teacher participants pointed out that there was no space provided in the pilot questionnaire for the open-ended written responses about teachers' attitudinal and behavioural changes related to the SBA and the NTS. Adequate space was therefore added in the final questionnaire.

The original research plan was to include items related to students who were in Grade 10 and Grade 11 (GCE O level) in the teacher questionnaire survey for comparison purposes, since GCE O level is considered as more high stakes than Grade 10. However, due to various reasons such as the Sri Lankan Government's decision to hold off the National Test of Speaking first to GCE O level, the items related to Grade 10 dropped from the final questionnaire.

3.7.4.2 Changes made in the student questionnaire

The pilot student questionnaire was in Tamil, which is the local language of the student participants. The piloting of the questionnaire and meetings with the class

teachers of the participants indicated that the translation of technical terms from English to Tamil might create confusion in the mind of students as well as teachers. One of the teachers pointed out that the translation of the phrases like ‘English as a Life Skill Programme’ and ‘integrated language tasks’ were unfamiliar terms among students. The teachers therefore suggested that the final questionnaire for students should be in English, while students were to be given the option to write their comments for the open ended questions in their native Tamil language if they wanted to.

Questions on demographic information, such as ‘what school year did you start to learn English in school?’, or ‘in what school year are you in now?’, were dropped and were not included in the final questionnaire because it was decided that these questions were beyond the scope of the study, and questions such as ‘what school year are you in now?’ were redundant because only Grade 11 students participated in the final survey.

Similar to the teacher questionnaire, more space for open-ended written responses was added in the final questionnaire.

3.7.5 Main study stage

3.7.5.1 Teacher questionnaire for main study

The teacher questionnaire consisted of twelve research themes, as explained in Table 3.9 below, which were derived from various sources aiming to obtain teachers’ personal, attitudinal and behavioural data related to the new assessment of speaking including the SBA and the NTS. Question 1 – Question 5 collect teachers’ demographic information: such as gender, age, and years of teaching

experience, academic and professional qualification. Question 6 – Question 11 were based on the teachers' perception of aspects of teaching, learning and assessment in relation to the new system of assessment. The next questions (Question 12 – Question 16) dealt with teachers' reactions to the new change in the classroom.

Question 6 – Question 16 was designed based on a five- point Likert scale of agreement and frequency which have been used in most of the empirical washback studies. It should be noted that under each question there was a space for teachers to add any comments or to write reasons for their answers to the question items. Further, Question 17 and Question 18 were open ended questions for the teachers to write their own comments about the SBA and the NTS. Space was also provided for the teachers to make any comments about the ELSP.

Table 3.8 Research themes of the teacher questionnaire (RQ 2)

Theme	Content	Items
Personal details		
01	Demographic information: gender, age, number of years of teaching, and academic and professional qualifications.	05
Teachers' perceptions and attitudes to the new change		
02	Emphasis is on learning speaking, NTS, and SBAs.	03
03	Factors involved in the teaching of speaking skills.	11
04	80hr teacher training	05
05	English as a Life Skill Programme on the National Rupavahini Television	04
Teachers' classroom behaviours		
06	Choice of speaking activities	14
07	Choice of the content of lessons	08
08	Choice of method of teaching	08
09	Amount of time spent on teaching speaking	08
10	Units taught	03
11	Changes noticed	11
12	Teaching and learning speaking skills	06

(See Appendix 6 for teacher questionnaire used for the main study)

3.7.5.2 Student questionnaire for main study

The student questionnaire consisted of ten research themes as shown in Table 3.9 below, which were derived from various sources aiming to obtain students' attitudinal data related to the new assessment of speaking including the SBA and the NTS. There were four questions (Question 1 – Question 3 and Question 9) about the students' perception of the effect of the new assessment on their teachers' teaching activities, and there were six questions (Question 4 – Question 8 and Question 10) about the students' perception of the effect of the new change on their own learning activities. The items under Question 1 – Question 3 were designed based on 'write or tick the appropriate answer or answers'. The items under Question 4 – Question 10 were designed based on a five-point Likert scale of agreement and frequency. Except for Question 1, there was space for students to add any comments or to write reasons for their answers to the items under each category from Question 2 – Question 10. Further, Question 11 and Question 12 were open ended questions for the students to write their own comments about the SBA and the NTS, and space was provided for the students to write their own comments about the ELSP.

Table 3.9 Research themes of the student questionnaire (RQ 2)

Theme	Content	Items
Students' attitude towards their teachers teaching activities		
01	Language used	04
02	Type of activities used	13
03	Materials used	08
04	Reasons for focus on speaking	02
Students' attitude towards their own learning activities		
05	Reasons for learning speaking skills	09
06/ 07	ELSP on National TV	01/09
08	Reasons for focus on learning speaking	03
09	Testing speaking at National level/ School level	02
10	What helps you to improve your speaking ability	03

(See Appendix 7 for student questionnaire used for the main study)

3.7.6 Main study data collection procedure for teacher and student questionnaire

After the sampling procedures were finalised, the list of schools was prepared (see section 3.4.2.1 above) and the respective school principals and the teachers were informed of the research purposes, the importance of their consent, and their participation in the research. The teachers were also asked to select ten students each from their respective classes, who were willing to participate in the study, attended school regularly and who they felt would be able to understand and respond to the questionnaire with minimal assistance.

An envelope containing one teacher questionnaire and ten student questionnaires as well as the information sheet and the consent form was handed over to each teacher participant directly by the researcher according to a pre-planned schedule. Reference numbers identifying the school and teachers were written on each envelope. This reference number encoded the educational zone that a particular school came under (BCO)/the type of the school (NS)/the name of the school (MCC) and teacher identification number such as the name of the school (MCC)/the name of the teacher (X) which helped me to overcome the confidential issues of direct identification of participants by others while allowing me to identify the schools and the participants from the codes.

At a pre-arranged meeting, the teachers were allowed to read through the questionnaire and to clarify any problems in understanding the content with the researcher. Since I would not have the chance to meet the students to give any explanation of the student questionnaire, the respective teachers were briefed about what the students were expected to do and were also requested to read through the questionnaire on behalf of their students for any clarification of points which the teachers felt that the students might find it difficult to understand. The teachers promised that the student questionnaires would be completed in the classroom itself, and that students would not be allowed to take questionnaires home. This was felt to be necessary to ensure that the students' responses would reflect their own view-points, and that the teachers would be there to assist with any problems that the students might experience in understanding the content. The completed questionnaires were collected on a separate date. This allowed the teachers to find time for completing the questionnaires that would be convenient for them and this

had a positive impact on the return rate of both the teacher and student questionnaires. It should be noted that the return rate was 100% in both cases.

In total, the questionnaire survey was carried out with 48 teachers and 480 students from three types of school (see Table 3.8 below) in the main study. The final teacher questionnaire was administered to a different, but comparable group of teachers. Similarly, the final student questionnaire was not administered to the same students who had participated in the piloting. Table 3.8 below provides details of sampling for the student survey.

Table 3.10 Sampling of teacher and student questionnaire survey for main study

Geographical location		Batticaloa District												Total
Administrative division		Zone 1			Zone 2			Zone 3			Zone 4			04
Type of schools		NS	1AB	1C	NS	1AB	1C	NS	1AB	1C	NS	1AB	1C	
Number of schools		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24
Number of Teachers	Division	A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	48
		B	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Number of Students	Division	A	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	480
		B	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	

The percentage return of the questionnaires was 100% for both the teacher questionnaire and student questionnaires.

3.7.6.1 Analysis of the questionnaire data

Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the quantitative data collected through both teacher and student questionnaires. The purpose of the analysis was to identify differences between two or more groups. Frequencies and percentages and forms of graphical presentations were used to summarise and capture patterns in the data.

3.8 Classroom Observation

Empirical studies are important in any washback research (Alderson and Wall 1993). Data obtained only by asking participants about how they act for a particular change are not sufficient enough to demonstrate that washback occurs to teaching process (Alderson and Wall 1993, Bailey 1999). Direct observation can relate what is obtained from survey studies to teacher behaviour in the classroom (Green 2007a). Washback studies conducted in varieties of contexts prove that the data obtained by asking participants do not always the same with what is observed in the classroom. “It (classroom observation) may contradict or recast the claims made by participants” (Green 2007a, p.137). The discussions show the importance of systematic classroom observations in the washback studies.

Many observation instruments have been developed in the field of general education as well as in the language education research to capture a range of factors involved in the classroom teaching but they are differ in many aspects such as type and number of content categories, coding procedures, units of analysis, and the purpose for which the instruments have been developed and also, there are no existing instruments, in particular, for classroom observation for washback studies of this nature, although there are washback studies by Alderson and Hamp- Lyons

1996, Cheng 2005, Wall 2005, Green 2007a and that involved adapted instruments for classroom observation. Cheng (2005, p.93) points out that ‘observation data should be obtained by a system capable of being described to others, to minimise the reflection of the observer’s personal expectations and achieve as much independence and objectivity of the data as possible’.

These viewpoints of researchers and reviews show that classroom observation and a scheme to systematically observe the classroom is important in any washback studies to see what the teachers have said, as their attitude and behaviour to a particular change are really happening in the classroom. This study focuses on the change in the educational system in Sri Lanka. The change is the introduction of new system of assessment of speaking at two levels – the SBA and the NTS – for the first time along with already existing reading and writing in the Sri Lankan school system.

Even though several classroom observation instruments have been used both in language and general education, The Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) Scheme (see section 3.8.1 below) has been widely used (Green 2007a) with adaptations to suit the research context and nature and scope of washback studies (as used by Watanabe 1996a, Burrows 1998, Cheng 2005, Green 2007a).

3.8.1 Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) Scheme

The COLT scheme pays close attention to what teachers and students actually do in the classroom and how they interact (which is directly relevant to the research question posed in this study). It consists of Two Parts (A and B). Part A of the COLT scheme (see Appendix 8) describes the classroom events in real time at the level of activities and their constituent episodes and coding for all categories on Part A is done in real time while the observers are present in the classroom as the lesson unfolds (see Appendix 12 and 15 for a Part A of the COLT scheme with observational records).

Part A of the scheme was used in this research since the analysis of classroom events at the level of activity best suited the nature of research question to be answered. Part B analyses the communicative features of verbal exchanges between teachers and students and/or students and students as they occur within each episode or activity (which was not considered since the research focus was not on communicative features of verbal interaction between teacher and students in the classroom).

3.8.2 Pilot study stage of classroom observation

First, a preliminary investigation was done to develop an understanding of the intended washback effect of the new system of assessment on teaching and the variables to be studied (see sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.4 above). The findings of questionnaires, interviews and material review from the pilot study and also the review of literature of theoretical models for the study of classroom teaching were used as a source in the classroom observation approaches. Based on these findings,

I decided to adapt from Part A of the COLT observation scheme and from Green (2007a).

The purpose of the classroom observation, in this study, was to find out what the observable washback effects of the National Test of Speaking and the School Based Assessment of Speaking were on teachers' practices. It further sought to establish whether these effects were consistent:

- with the impact intended by the policy makers;
- with what teachers themselves had said about their perceptions of the effect of the National Test of Speaking and the School Based Assessment of Speaking.

The adapted observation scheme was trialled with the video recorded lessons of classroom teaching in the Sri Lankan context, and then piloted with three teachers in real classroom teaching. Necessary changes in layout and content were made before the scheme was used for classroom observation in the main study (see section 3.8.2.1. below). Two observers (I was one of the observers and the other observer was an experienced retired English teacher) sat at the back of the classroom and used the observation scheme to record each classroom event independently as lessons progressed.

The piloting of observation instrument was done with the intention of identifying the need for any further changes (such as the addition of more categories or the deletion of existing categories which might not be germane to the purpose of the classroom observations) and also understanding of possible difficulties in using the

instrument in real teaching and learning situations. The pilot study helped to further refine the observation scheme and procedures for the main study.

3.8.2.1 Changes made to the classroom observation instrument after piloting

A need to adapt and modify the observation scheme to meet the needs of the research purpose became apparent during the piloting stage of the study. There were categories deleted, added or changes made in the organisation of the observation scheme, because some of the categories were not considered to be relevant in this particular research context.

There were no columns in either scheme to describe the language used by teachers and students during the lesson in the classroom. As participants often switched between English and Tamil, a new column was added to record the switch in the new scheme prepared for this study.

The Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) scheme has a column for activities and episodes but there is no division within this column but the column for activities and episodes is divided into two parts (teacher actions and student action) in the scheme used by Green (2007a). During piloting, it proved to be difficult, but unnecessary to differentiate between activities and episodes. For the main study, I chose to replace the activities and episodes column with one that captures student engagement in classroom activities with a division between ‘passive’ activities (initiated by teacher) and ‘actively engaged’ activities (initiated by a single student or group of students) (see also section 3.8.3 below).

There were three types of participant organisation under class in both schemes. One is $T \leftrightarrow S/C$ and the COLT explanation is “... the teacher interacts with the whole

class and/or with individual students within the central activity.” But the COLT does not explain about individual students or the whole class interaction with the teacher. Therefore, the new scheme includes this explanation.

Further, the COLT scheme explanation for ‘Group’ under participant organisation is “Groups/ pairs of students all work on the same task.” but only ‘Group’ is mentioned in the COLT scheme. Therefore, the new scheme includes ‘Pair/ Group’ in place of ‘Group’.

Under the category content, several changes were made. The feature ‘language’ is termed ‘focus of instruction’ to avoid confusion with the term ‘language’ used in the second column. The focus of instruction is further divided into form, function, and meaning. Sociolinguistics is not included because it falls outside the scope of the study. The feature ‘discourse’ is also not included because it refers to the way in which sentences (spoken) combine into cohesive and coherent sequences. This is closer to analyses of communicative features of verbal exchanges. But the research focus is whether the teacher focuses on any grammar rules (form), purposes for which the language is to be used (function), or message that the speaker intends to convey (meaning).

The category of ‘topic’ under the heading of content differs in this study from the other two schemes. In the instrument developed for the main study, there are four columns under ‘topic’. When the content of teaching and learning activities is about English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP), National Test of Speaking (NTS), and School Based Assessment (SBA), there is a column to check and when the content is about any other topic, check would be entered under the ‘other’ column.

The column ‘content control’ from the COLT scheme is not included in the new scheme because the preliminary investigations showed that students simply never exerted any control over the selection of lesson content. It was also found during trialling, even before piloting of the new observation scheme that during observation it would be hard to find for-what the content of the lessons depended on. It was decided that it could only be found through the follow up interviews, soon after the classroom observation was over (see section 3.8.7 below).

The category of ‘materials’ is also different from the other two schemes. The new scheme includes the categories of ‘audio’, ‘video’, ‘visual’ and ‘other’ to suit the purpose of the research.

The COLT scheme includes no section for notes/comments but Green (2007a) includes a section for this. The new scheme also includes a section for the purpose of notes/comments about various aspects of classroom teaching and learning activities related to the new change.

3.8.3 Classroom observation instrument for main study

The observation instrument consists of major categories to capture events in the English language teaching and learning classrooms in Sri Lanka. The research focuses on several features of classroom teaching and learning such as language used for classroom interactions, teaching and learning activities, participant organisation, content of classroom activities, student modality, and these features are further divided into several sub-features for exploring the washback effect of the new change in teaching and learning in the classroom (see Appendix 8 for classroom observation scheme for the main study). There are also columns for

categories such as materials, topic of the lesson and types of activities and notes/comments on lesson observed. These categories are not considered when calculating of class time spent on features mentioned before but important for the purpose of this research.

Below are explained the rationale for the categories in the observation scheme; and how they were defined; and how they were recorded in real time: while observers were present in the classroom as the lessons unfolded. The categories are presented in the order in which they appear on the scheme.

1. Student engagement: This category is divided into ‘passive’ activities and students ‘actively engaged’ activities. These constitute all the instructional segments of a classroom. All the activities within a single lesson are timed so that percentage of classroom time spent on the individual categories under investigation are examined in relation to the objectives of the research.

Note: Passive activities include interactions which are initiated by teacher and to which majority of students are exposed to and teachers’ responses to questions or solicits posed by students. For example: asking questions, presenting information, giving instructions for participant organisation, and classroom management, giving task related instructions, and so on.

Student’s ‘actively engaged’ activities are initiated by a single student or group of students and to which majority of class members are exposed to and they respond to questions or solicits posed by class members. Student activities include writing

down language points which they feel important to perform a task or are requested by teacher, loud reading, discussion, role play and so on.

2. Time: In the observation scheme, time is divided within the lesson for various activities and expressed as a percentage of class time (see section 3.8.8 below for calculation procedures). This category acts as a basic unit of analysis. Starting time of each activity is recorded so that calculation of time spent on the selected features for observation can be determined. Spada and Fröhlich (1995) explained about 'time' as a basic unit of analysis of classroom activities that both linguistic and pedagogic features can be easily calculated as a percentage of class time.

Under the new change, the teacher is expected to assign more time to students for practice opportunities to develop of their ability to communicate in the language. If washback has occurred in line with policy intentions, the introduction of new system of assessment should have led to a change from teacher-centred classroom teaching to a more student- oriented classroom. Opportunities for practice are measured in terms of the percentage of class time assigned to the students to carry out language activities in the classroom.

3. Language: Under language category, there are three features; L1 (first language of teachers and students- Tamil), L2 (English), L1 and L2.

The target language (L2) is expected to be dominant in the classroom activities and teachers are expected to provide more opportunities to the students to use the L2 in the classroom and this will enable the students to deal with real language outside the classroom setting.

4. Participant organisation: This category refers to how the seating arrangements of students are organised in the classroom. There are three basic features identified under this category: class, group, and individual.

Class is further divided into four patterns:

- teacher interacts with the whole class and/ or individual students within a particular activity during a lesson;
- individual students or the whole class interact with the teacher;
- an individual student or more than one student interact(s) with the whole class;
- the whole class or group(s) of students involve in choral work.

Group is further divided into two. Groups or pairs of students do the same task.

Groups or pairs of students do different task within the same lesson.

Individual students can do same task or different task within a lesson.

5. Content: This category refers to what teachers and students are talking, reading and writing about or listening to within an activity in classroom. In traditional second language teaching and learning, grammar (form) was focused more. Then the focus was shifted to meaning-oriented instruction but now the emphasis on combination of form and meaning.

There are three features identified under this category: management, focus of instruction, and topic.

Management includes class time spent on procedural directives (e.g. take out your exercise books) and class time spent on disciplinary activities (e.g. you should not pull your chairs along when getting ready for group work activities. It would disturb other classes).

Focus of instruction includes: form, function, and meaning. When the classroom time is spent on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation related activities, form is checked mark. When focus is on communicative acts (e.g. comparing, inviting, asking for permission, requesting, and offering help) then time is considered as spent on function. When the classroom activities are based on meaning (e.g. conversation between a man at a counter in a rail station and a traveller), then it is check marked under meaning.

Under the feature topic, there are four items: NTS, SBA, Both (the NTS and the SBA) and other. When the class time is spent on referring about the NTS and SBA then check mark will be under the column 'Both' and other features are also check marked accordingly.

6. Student modality: In communicative language teaching, teachers are expected to integrate skill areas (speaking, listening, reading and writing) but not to isolate the skill areas when teaching L2.

Under this category, there are five features identified: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and other. The feature 'other' would include activities (e.g. drama and acts out a skit) other than listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

7. Materials: It is expected that teachers should use authentic materials in their teaching and learning activities in the classroom, so that students would find

it easier to deal with ‘real’ language in the natural setting that they are going to face with,

Under this category four features are identified based on the text type: audio, video, visual (e.g. chart, graphs, information cards, and flash cards) and other (e.g. blackboard, and whiteboard).

8. Types of activities: This category describes what type of activities are conducted in the classroom by teachers (e.g. dialogue, telephone conversation, role play, and drama)
9. Notes/ comments: This category is for observer’s comments on various features during observations of lessons (e.g. available facilities in the classroom for teaching and learning, whether students are actively involved in the lesson, and any other features that the observer feels related to the change.)

It was found during the trialling of the new scheme that it would be useful to take additional notes about other aspects of the teaching and learning activities which might not to be covered by the categories in the new scheme over the period of observation.

3.8.4 Sampling for classroom observation

Schools representing the three selected types were chosen in each of the four zones. One teacher each from the three types of schools was selected. They were observed three times to a pre-planned schedule, making 36 observations (see Table 3.11 below).

Table 3.11 Main study classroom observation schedule

Zone	Type of school	School ID	Teacher ID	Date of visits		
				1st	2nd	3rd
1	National	BCO/NS/CC	BCO/NS/CC/X	06.09.2013	13.09.2013	26.09.2013
	1AB	BCO/1AB/HC	BCO/1AB/HC/X	01.10.2013	03.10.2013	04.10.2013
	1C	BCO/1C/AP	BCO/1C/AP/X	17.10.2013	24.10.2013	31.10.2013
2	National	BC/NS/MB	BC/NS/MB/X	05.09.2013	19.09.2013	03.10.2013
	1AB	BC/1AB/OB	BC/1AB/OB/X	31.10.2013	07.11.2013	14.11.2013
	1C	BC/1C/AM	BC/1C/AM/X	09.09.2013	14.09.2013	21.09.2013
3	National	KAL/NS/VM	KAL/NS/VM/X	02.09.2013	16.09.2013	23.09.2013
	1AB	KAL/1AB/MV	KAL/1AB/MV/X	03.09.2013	10.09.2013	17.09.2013
	1C	KAL/1C/KN	KAL/1C/KN/X	01.11.2013	08.11.2013	15.11.2013
4	National	PAT/NS/PR	PAT/NS/PR/X	04.11.2013	11.11.2013	18.11.2013
	1AB	PAT/1AB/KV	PAT/1AB/KV/X	08.10.2013	15.10.2013	29.10.2013
	1C	PAT/1C/TT	PAT/1C/TT/X	04.10.2013	11.10.2013	18.10.2013

3.8.4.1 Teacher participants for classroom observation

Previous studies show that a major challenge in this type of independent research is to obtain teachers' cooperation for classroom observation and follow-up interviews. It was extremely difficult to find teachers who are willing to permit researchers into their classrooms and many teachers feel too busy to volunteer for research. Classroom observation can be a sensitive issue that provokes anxiety. Teachers can find it intrusive to have outsiders in their classrooms (Allwright and Bailey 1991).

Therefore, the sampling of teachers was deliberate, but depended on mutual agreement: Cohen *et al.* (2011) call this purposive sampling.

The following criteria were considered to identify potential teachers who were teaching English in the GCE (O/L) for observation:

- teachers who were willing to accept observations of their classroom teaching, follow up interviews after the observation and to share a copy of their lesson plan with the observer;
- teachers who were ready to spend time to cross check the data obtained during observation in order to confirm whether the observer had made the correct interpretations;
- teachers who were confident that their students would behave as usual in classroom activities in the presence of observers;
- school principals who were willing to grant permission for classroom observation;

3.8.5 Main study data collection procedure for classroom observation

Classroom observations were neither audio nor video recorded, as teachers had said that recording would be intrusive to both the teachers and students.

In this research, observation and introspection were employed as strategies in classroom observation and post-observation interview with the teacher participants. The purpose of the post-observation interview was two-fold. First, they provided a means of looking for brief answers to the semi structured interview questions

immediately following the observation. Second, this interview provided an opportunity for the teachers to explain or clarify the actions recorded on the observation instrument.

The researcher made efforts to minimise his intrusiveness in the classroom as it might affect the teacher's and students' teaching and learning behaviour (Spada and Fröhlich 1995).

In these classroom observations, consistency of data collection and analysis was achieved by employing a second observer to work along with the researcher and by cross checking the finalised data with the teacher participants. The second observer was a retired English teacher with more than twenty-five years of experience in the field of English teaching and assessment activities. He had also been working as an In-service advisor for English teaching, learning and assessment activities in schools. The objectives of classroom observations and recordings of classroom activities using the observation scheme were explained to the second observer in detail.

The observations were carried out to a schedule prepared after discussion with the teachers who had consented to be observed. Three observations of lessons were carried out to observe the same teacher teaching speaking lessons to the same students in Grade 11.

All school visits were prearranged with the teachers and the respective school principals. The teachers were contacted before the observation day to confirm the arrangements for the observation session.

The choice of time period for observation was significant for this study. Many researchers point to relationship between time and washback, with washback increasing in intensity as the test date nears (Freeman (1996), Shohamy *et al* (1996), Wall and Alderson (1993), Watanabe (1996) and Bailey (1999) have all used the term ‘seasonality’ to refer to this phenomenon (see Chapter 2 – section 2.3.2.6). All 36 classroom observations were carried out between September and November in 2013. This is the period immediately leading up to the National test, which is conducted with students in Grade 11 in December each year.

As events turned out, contrary to the government’s original intentions, the National Test of Speaking had still not been introduced, nor had any official announcement been made of the date when it would be. As a result, teachers were still preparing students for a test that did not include a speaking component.

3.8.6 Method of recording classroom observation

Observations were done by me and the second observer. We both sat in the back of the classroom and did not interact with students or teachers or each other. We timed and coded (check mark relevant categories on the new scheme) the classroom activities. We confirmed between us that we had made the same coding decisions.

3.8.7 Follow-up interviews

After each classroom observation of teaching and learning a follow up interview was conducted with the teachers according to an interview schedule with a set of questions for the purpose of understanding whether or not the new system of assessment had any influence on the way the teachers behaved in the classroom and

also for validating the recorded observation data (see Appendix 16 for interview schedule for the main study).

The observation scheme captured the classroom activities and behaviours of the teacher (and students). This was combined with field notes taken during the classes including the physical setting of the context where observation was taking place and data obtained in the follow-up interviews in order to obtain a complete picture of lessons observed. Further, the review of the literature indicated that observations alone can reveal only part of what happens in the classroom setting. Therefore, data from the questionnaire surveys, interviews and documents analysis were employed to validate the observation data as part of the process of triangulation.

3.8.8 Analysis of observation data

The structured observation scheme enabled the collected data to be quantified and also to be statistically treated. The time spent on the individual categories by the same teacher who was observed three times was compared and combined by calculating the average time spent on each category.

In order to calculate the duration of each activity the starting time of an activity was subtracted from the starting time of the following activity.

The data collected were analysed by calculating the percentage of classroom time spent on the individual categories under investigation and the results were examined in relation to the objectives of the research.

The basic unit of analysis was the time spent on different activities ('passive' activities and 'actively engaged' activities under column 1 and 2 in the main study

observation scheme) (see section 3.8.3 above) and it was important to ensure that the student engagement in classroom activities had been timed and numbered during the observation period so that percentage of time spent on various categories both within individual activities and across the whole lesson could be calculated.

To illustrate the method of coding the data, the classroom observation data along with follow-up interview data is shown in Appendix 15 (Observation data – visit 1 – a summary of the coding applied by the two observers of the same lesson). The lesson lasted for 38 minutes and recorded on the sixth of September 2013 (visit 1) (school identification code: BCO/NS/CC and teacher identification code: CC/X).

In this lesson, which lasted 38 minutes, there were five activities in which students were passive and five in which they were actively engaged (see section 3.8.3 above for definition of active and passive involvement of students in classroom activities).

The first step is to calculate the percentage of time spent on each of the categories checked off in the observation scheme. In order to calculate this, first the activities which have only one check mark (*exclusive focus* on that category during an activity), or one circled check mark (*primary focus* on that category during an activity) are considered. Then, calculate percentage of time spent on each particular category. Finally activities which have two or more check marks or two or more circled check marks (*combination of focus* during an activity) are considered.

3.8.8.1 Calculations for exclusive focus on instruction units

In Column 4, under category ‘language used in classroom activities’ the instruction unit ‘L1’ was checked off as an exclusive focus in student activity A. This activity lasted for only one minute.

Table 3.12 Calculations for exclusive focus

Teacher ID Code and observed lesson number	Activity	Column	Category	Duration of activity (in minutes)	Calculations	Comments
BCO/ NS/CC/X Lesson 1	A	4	Language L1	01	$\frac{1}{38} \times 100 = 2.6\%$	The students used L1 (Tamil) exclusively only for 2.6% of 38 minute class time in interacting with class teacher.
	C, E	5	L2	4+13= 17	$\frac{17}{38} \times 100 = 45\%$	The students used L2 (English) exclusively for 45% of 38 minute class time for various classroom activities (writing/ reporting information to class)

3.8.8.2 Calculations for primary focus on instruction units

In activity B, there is a circled check mark in Column 6 (L1 & L2). This means that a student was using L1 (Tamil) and L2 (English) that is, the primary focus was L1 and L2. This activity lasted for three minutes. The same occurred in Activity D.

This activity lasted for twelve minutes. These two activities (B and D) lasted for fifteen minutes in total. Note that check mark for activity B and D in Column 5 were not considered in this calculation.

Table 3.13 Calculations for primary focus

Teacher ID Code and observed lesson number	Activity	Column	Category	Duration of activity (in minutes)	Calculations	Comments
BCO/ NS/CC/X Lesson 1	B	6	Language L1& L2	3	15/38X 100=39%	Students used L1 and L2 for 39% of 38 minute class time for interaction.
	D			12		

All the percentages for the categories under ‘language used in classroom activities’, which received an exclusive or primary focus of both teachers and students could be calculated in this way.

3.8.8.3 Calculations for combination of focus on instruction units

Activity B provides an example of a combination of features which lasted for three minutes. Combinations are calculated separately from an exclusive or primary focus and are reported separately as well.

Table 3.14 Calculations for combination of focus

Teacher ID Code and observed lesson number	Activity	Column	Category	Duration of activity (in minutes)	Calculations	Comments
BCO/ NS/CC/X Lesson 1	B	24,25,26	Student modality	3	3/38X 100=8%	Students focused on combination of speaking and reading spending 8% of forty minute class time.

3.8.9 Summarising the observation data

Once the data have been analysed in this manner, all percentage values of a 38 minute lesson under all the categories which have been checked off are summarised.

Table 3.15 Summary of analysed classroom observation data

Code (teachers) and observed lesson number	Category	Type of focus	Calculation	Total	Comments
BCO/ NS/CC/X Lesson 1	Language L1	Exclusive	$1/38 \times 100 = 2.6\%$	41.6%	Students used L1 exclusively for 2.6% and L1 and L2 for 39% of the class time for various classroom activities.
		Primary	$15/38 \times 100 = 39\%$		
		Combination	In this category no combination		
	L2	Exclusive	$17/38 \times 100 = 47.5\%$	45%	Students used L2 exclusively for 45% of the class time for various classroom activities.
		Primary	In this category no combination		
		Combination	In this category no combination		

It is important to note that categories in the observation scheme that are checked off but do not indicate either exclusive, primary or combination with equal focus are ignored in calculations of percentage of time spent on classroom activities because the research is interested in those features which are prominent in the teaching and learning activities of the teachers observed.

3.8.10 Analysis of follow-up interview data

The follow-up interview data were tabulated under headings in the prepared interview schedule (see Appendix 16).

The tabulated data of the observed lessons were used to understand:

- the objectives of the lessons, whether objectives were achieved;
- what the content of lessons was based on;
- what the methods of teaching were based on;

The analysis of data was done to establish whether or not the SBA or the NTS had any influence on the teacher's and student's classroom practices. The follow-up interviews also served the purpose of complementing the recorded observation data with the teachers involved.

3.9 Ethical issues

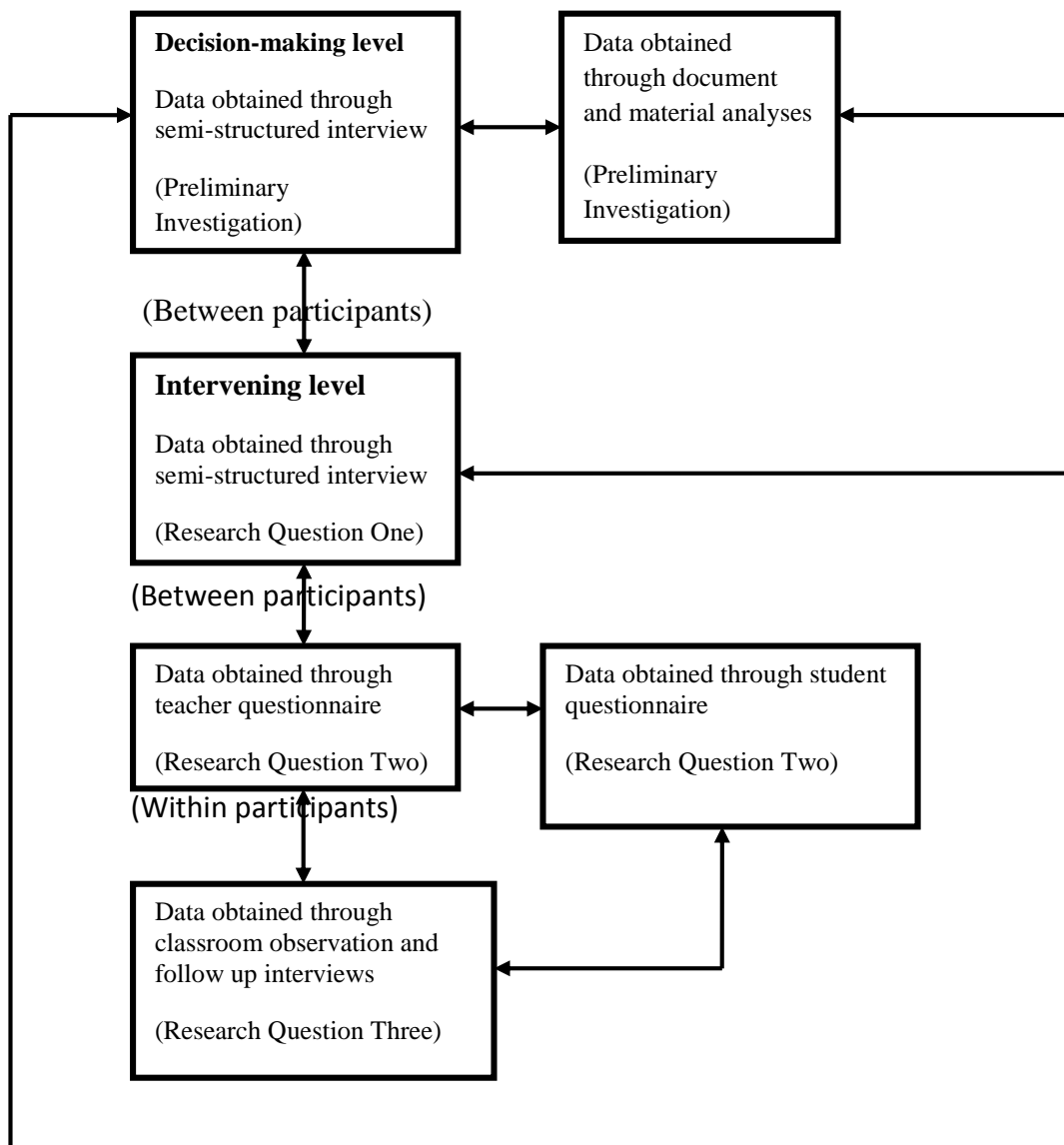
Ethical issues were considered important in this research. The research participants were informed about the overall purpose of research as well as the importance of participation in this research project (Hawkey 2006). They were also informed that their names and the positions they held in the educational institutions would not be divulged to others under any circumstances. A consent form was issued to all the research participants at the intervening and implementing level informing them of the purpose of the research, their right to withdraw from the interview at any time, and explaining that their identity would not be revealed to anyone.

3.10 Triangulation

The mixed methods research approach paves the way for triangulating data. It helps to increase the reliability and validity of the data and one can be more confident in the conclusion (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). The quality control and representativeness of the study could be achieved by employing various approaches to triangulation (Allwright and Bailey 1991, van Lier 1989, Wall 2005, Green 2007a). Data triangulation (data from participants at different levels, classroom observations and materials analysis), methodological triangulation (survey questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations) and researcher triangulation (participants other than the researcher involved in classroom observations) approaches were used in this study.

Different approaches to triangulation as shown in Figure 3.2 below were used to answer the research questions and to validate data from various sources and participants at different levels.

Figure 3.2 Different approaches to triangulation employed in this study



The information provided through interviews by participants at the decision making level was triangulated with the data collected through interviews from participants at the intervening level for two purposes. First, to see if there were any gaps in how the participants translate messages about policy between the decision-making level and the implementing level and second, to establish how messages were passed onto the participants at the implementing level and to get an idea of what teaching

and learning activities looked like before the change was introduced in 2011. The survey data from teachers were triangulated with the students' survey data and with the classroom observation data to see what teachers said as their perceptions of the washback effects of the assessment was reflected in their instructional practices in the classrooms, and also to see if there were any gaps between what students said as the perceptions of the assessment change on their teachers' teaching activities and their own learning activities.

3.11 Summary

In conclusion, this Chapter presented the research methodology. The research questions in this study addressed the effects of assessment change on teaching and learning activities. To fit the purpose of the study, I opted for a mixed methods research approach using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods adopted included document reviews and semi-structured interviews with participants at the decision making and intervening level. The quantitative approaches included teacher and student questionnaires. Classroom observations, which combined quantitative observation of timings classroom activities with qualitative interviews with participating teachers, were also conducted. The data collected through the combination of research methods was used to answer the research questions and to triangulate evidence from different participants, using different methods.

Chapter 4 Results and Discussion– Interviews

In this Chapter, the findings from interviews with participants at the intervening level will be discussed in relation to Research Question One (RQ 1): Are there any gaps between policy makers' intentions and the intervening level participants' understanding of the assessment change? (see Chapter 3 – section 3.2.1). The interviews formed one part of the research data and the other part was made up of questionnaire survey (the teacher questionnaire and the student questionnaire – to be discussed in Chapter 5) and classroom observations (to be discussed in Chapter 6).

4.1 Interviews with the intervening level participants

The purpose of the interview with the intervening level participants was to observe any gaps in translating messages about the assessment change from the top decision-making level to the intervening level and to explore what changes had occurred in teachers' attitude and behaviour in aspects of teaching and learning (from the perspective of the intervening level participants) since the introduction of the change.

The intervening level participants in this study were four In-Service Advisors (ISAs), three Master Trainers (MTs), and three Assistant Directors of English (ADEs) with different types of official duties assigned to them under the assessment change within the English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP).

The main tasks of ISAs were visiting schools and observing teaching and learning activities in the classroom. They observed any lessons during their school visits. However, the main duty of the Master Trainers was to monitor the speaking classes.

The ADEs had a weekly meeting with ISAs and MTs to discuss the teaching, learning and assessment activities in the classroom and to prepare a report to be sent to the Provincial Educational Authorities (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.1.2).

These intervening level people come in between decision making and implementing level participants. Any policy decisions towards ELSP are conveyed to the implementing level through the intervening level participants. Therefore, I included these intervening level participants to gain insight into their own understanding of the assessment change and to find what changes they had observed in teachers' and students' attitude and classroom practices in the teaching and learning of speaking since the change.

All the interviews were carried out in 2013, two years after the introduction of the assessment change in 2011: the introduction of school-based assessment (SBA) and the announcement of the planned National Test of Speaking (NTS). Since no NTS was introduced in 2013, the interview participants might be unable to answer the questions about the impact of the NTS on teaching and learning activities in great detail (Chapter 1 – section 1.5). The interviews were semi-structured and the themes were decided upon before the interview. All interviews were audio recorded and conducted in English. The interview data were transcribed as verbatim accounts, categorised and analysed under the predetermined themes to search for answers to RQ 1 (see Appendix 17 for an interview transcript with one of the intervening level participants).

These themes included intentions of the assessment change within the ELSP, preparations made for the implementation of the change, changes observed in

teachers' (and students') attitudes and behaviours in relation to teaching, learning, and assessment of speaking, responsibilities of the intervening level participants in implementing the change, teachers' perceptions of the NTS and the SBA, and the postponement of the NTS. I also gathered information about classroom practices in relation to teaching speaking before the assessment change in 2011.

Overall, the interviews with intervening level participants suggest that changes did occur in teachers' attitudes and classroom practices in relation to teaching speaking between the introduction of the assessment change in 2011 and 2013, when the interviews were held. The following sections present and discuss the findings from the interviews around the different themes.

4.2 Intentions of the change

The interviews revealed that all 10 participants had similar views about the intentions behind the new speaking test. Their views were similar to those of the policy makers: that the assessment change carries the aim of preparing school students with the necessary competencies in speaking English for higher education and for job opportunities both locally and in foreign countries when they leave school. One Master Trainer, INL/BCO/MT, explained the intentions of the government:

School students are learning English for nearly eleven years in their school career; they are unable to utter a word of English, except to answer a few questions like "What is your name?" and "Where are you from?" So, the government wanted all the students to be fluent in speaking English when they go out of school (INL/BCO/MT).

An Assistant Director of English, INL/PAT/ADE, expressed his views about the introduction of new assessment change:

Now, English has become as a life skill similar to that of the vocational skills such as masonry and carpentry. English skills, especially fluency in speaking is very important in the local and foreign job market. Therefore, the government implemented a project called ELSP aiming to give more emphasis on speaking (INL/PAT/ADE).

Their comments suggest that these intervening level participants shared the views of the policy makers that students generally had poor levels of speaking ability when they left school, while speaking was an important skill for students to find employment and further educational opportunities.

4.3 Preparations for the implementation of the assessment change

When the interview participants were asked to comment on the preparations made for the implementation of the speaking test, all of them commented on the new *Teacher Guide: Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English* (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.3), 80-hour Teacher Training (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5), and the English as a Life Skill Programme on National television¹. The following are some representative points made by them about the Teacher Guide:

The Teacher Guide was prepared by experienced teachers who were well aware of the local context and need of school students. I think this was the first instance that we neither imported any foreign experts nor followed foreign models in the preparation of this guide (INL/BC/MT).

One of the Master Trainers commented that the teachers found it hard to plan their lessons for speaking activities before the Teacher Guide was introduced:

Earlier, teachers were struggling to write a plan, I mean what you call it an activity plan or lesson plan to guide their speaking lessons, but now models have been given in the Teacher Guide. So they take them from the Teacher Guide and prepare their lessons to suit

¹The programme was organised by the Ministry of Education and telecast on the National Rupavahini Television since 2013 with the hope of providing support to teachers of English in planning and conducting speaking skills and providing support to students in GCE O level.

the ability of the students and available time and resources in the classroom. The Teacher Guide is very useful for the teachers in preparing plans for teaching speaking (INL/KAL/MT).

One of the participants commented that the Teacher Guide was useful since it consists of teaching materials for teaching and assessment of speaking:

The Teacher Guide consists of tools for School Based Assessments with guidelines to plan their [teachers'] assessments. Now, the teachers know how to plan their speaking activities and assessments for speaking. It is a good thing that the Teacher Guide consists of teaching materials and assessment tools for speaking (INL/ /KAL/ ISA).

These comments suggest that the Teacher Guide was considered by the intervening level participants to be a useful resource for the teachers because there were model plans to guide their lesson planning and assessment activities for speaking which had been lacking before the change.

One of the Master Trainers (INL/BCO/MT) evaluated the usefulness of the English as a Life Skill Programme on television with a positive note:

Now they [teachers] are confident of their teaching methods and assessment approaches of speaking because of awareness created by media. The National Television Channel telecast a programme called "English as a Life Skill" with the aim of creating awareness among teachers and students and among general public about the importance of teaching and learning speaking and also with an aim of helping teachers in how to conduct speaking lessons in the classroom (INL/BCO/MT).

He further explained that this programme contributed towards the changing approach of teachers and students to teaching and learning speaking.

The Master Trainer INL/BCO/MT commented that the 80-hour teacher training programme specially designed for the teachers to provide practical sessions in teaching and assessing speaking activities was useful, but may not be sufficient to

effect significant changes in teachers as the training only lasts for a limited period of time:

I do not say, in the short training sessions, we had given them [teachers] everything to expect a very good change in them. However, it [teacher training] helped them in how to plan teaching and assessing speaking (INL/BCO/MT).

The comments on teacher training indicate that it was useful for the teachers since it helped them in their lesson planning and assessment activities. However, the period of training was not enough to achieve the intended changes in teachers.

4.4 Changes in teachers' attitudes and classroom practices

The interview participants compared teachers' attitudes and classroom behaviours in relation to teaching, learning and assessment of speaking in the past with those they had observed under the new system.

4.4.1 Teaching and learning

All four In-Service Advisors, two Assistant Directors of Education (English), and one Master Trainer reported that speaking had not been a focus for teachers before the change was introduced. One of the In-Service Advisors, INL/BCO/ISA, stated that:

Before ELSP, there was no need for teachers for teach speaking (INL/BCO/ISA).

She further explained the reasons why certain other skills were focused on, but not speaking:

One reason was that there was no testing of speaking and even the educational authorities were not much serious about speaking. Therefore, importance was given to activities that were tested and that

affected their [school students'] examination results. Now [after the ELSP], the teachers and students have a need to focus on speaking activities. Their attitude changed and they started to give equal importance to speaking activities like other activities in the text books.

(INL/BCO/ISA)

A Master Trainer, INL/KAL/MT, explained how teachers had conducted speaking lessons before the change:

Earlier, the complaint was that teachers did not teach speaking even in the allocated hours for teaching speaking. Instead they concentrated on other activities which were tested at the examinations (INL/KAL/MT).

He reported that the teachers had a change in attitude towards teaching speaking:

Now, they use up the allocated time for speaking and go one step further to complain that one period for a week is not enough to cover up the speaking skills in the syllabus. You can see, this is a clear change in teachers' thinking to teaching speaking (INL/KAL/MT).

In line with the participants above, one ISA (INL/KAL/ISA) observed changes in the speaking classrooms following the introduction of ELSP:

The decision to test speaking has made the teachers plan activities where students get more opportunities for speaking but before this [introduction of ELSP] it was hard to see that teachers were focusing on speaking activities in the classroom (INL/KAL/ISA).

One of the ADEs (INL/PAT/ADE) interviewed was also of the same opinion that teachers wanted the students to get more practice in speaking skills under the ELSP.

He explained:

The good thing is that now teachers are really working hard to motivate the students for the speaking test (INL/PAT/ADE).

The interview participants' comments show that speaking was not a focus before the assessment change was introduced. The reason was, as suggested by one of the In-Service Advisors, INL/BCO/ISA, that speaking was not tested before the ELSP. From the participants' point of view, since the introduction of the speaking

assessments, teachers focused more on speaking activities and organised activities such a way that students could spend more class time on speaking activities and to have more group work activities.

4.4.2 Use of speaking activities in the English Pupil's Books and English Workbook

The interview participants commented on the textbooks (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.3 for teaching and learning materials). They said that after the introduction of assessment change and the subsequent introduction of the new Teacher Guide, the use of the speaking activities in the textbooks and workbook increased. One of the In-Service Advisors, INL/BC/ISA, reported as follows:

There was a remarkable increase in the use of speaking activities in the prescribed text books. They use the models and guidance in the Teacher Guide for plan their speaking activities in the textbooks and they also use the speaking activities in the Teacher Guide in addition to the textbook activities (INL/BC/ISA).

He explained the reason for this change in teachers as follows:

Before the Teacher Guide was issued to the teachers, they were not familiar with writing of lesson plans for speaking lessons. They used role plays [from the textbooks] in speaking lessons like reading activities. Teachers wanted students to write a role play and to read out in the classroom. Now, lesson planning and method of teaching changed, may be because of the special training under ELSP and the Teacher Guide (INL/BC/ISA).

One of the ADEs (INL/ADE/BCO) also observed that teachers had been looking for other resources for teaching speaking in addition to using the resources in the textbooks:

What I heard from the ISAs and Master Trainers and what I saw in my school visits were, teachers are now looking for resources to enhance their teaching speaking activities and they want us to help them to find

materials for their teaching and assessment of oral activities (INL/ADE/BCO).

The participants' comments suggest that the use of speaking activities in the English Pupil's books increased and teachers were looking for additional resources to help their students in speaking.

4.4.3 Approaches to teaching speaking

INL/PAT/ISA, one of the In-Service Advisors interviewed reported that there were changes in the teachers' approach to teaching:

The teachers do a lot of group work activities in the classroom after this programme was introduced (INL/PAT/ISA).

He also emphasised that:

It can also be observed now that teachers and students use more English not only in their speaking classes but in reading and writing classes as well. These are the changes that we can observe in the classrooms (INL/PAT/ISA).

All four ISAs also commented on teachers' increased commitment in preparing and using teaching aids and lesson plans in their speaking activities. One of the participants (INL/BC/ISA) said:

Actually, those days only a few teachers did teach speaking and even [when] they did [they] never use[d] teaching aids such as audio and video recordings in their teaching, but now it has greatly changed. Most of the teachers are trying to incorporate these in their speaking activities (INL/BC/ISA).

Another ISA, INL/BCO/ISA, commented that:

Now teachers dedicate more time to prepare detailed lesson plans for their speaking activities. They plan their activities in a way to have more student involvement and now they allocate more class time for students in their planning of speaking lessons unlike other classes where teacher use a lot of class time in explaining grammar points and in error correction (INL/BCO/ISA).

All the interview participants at the intervening level reported that that teachers spent more class time in speaking activities after the introduction of assessment change. For example, one of the Master Trainers, INL/BCO/MT, said:

The teachers allow children to spend more time in the speaking classes now and I observe this in my visits to schools since the government's decision to test speaking. But, it is not the same in the normal classes [where writing and reading are conducted] where teachers always dominate the classroom activities. When I meet the ADE and ISAs at weekly meetings in the office, they also have the same opinion. I think, teachers follow what was said in the teachers training (INL/BCO/MT).

The comments by the INL/BCO/MT indicate that teachers started to allocate more class time on student speaking activities since the introduction of ELSP in 2011, whereas in reading and writing classes, teachers dominated the classroom activities.

One ISA (INL/BC/ ISA) also commented on the changes in teachers' behaviour in the speaking classes. His comments were:

There are several changes in what teachers do in the classroom and how they do. I like to point out that before [the ELSP] the teachers thought that the students should not make any mistakes in use of English so they spent a lot of class time in explaining grammar and corrections in students' writing allowing less time for students activities but now [after the ELSP] specially in the speaking classes, I observe teachers allow students to do activities more independently and teachers involve only when students want them (INL/BC/ ISA).

All the three ADEs interviewed were of the same opinion as the MTs and ISAs that the teachers organised speaking activities in a way to have more students' involvement in the speaking activities. For example, one of the ADEs (INL/PAT/ADE) reported that:

Now, they [teachers] allow the students to get involved more in the speaking activities in the forty minute lesson (INL/ PAT/ADE).

The participants at the intervening level were satisfied that students were exposed to English more in their speaking classes when compared to before the change and other classes (reading and writing). One participant (INL/KAL/ISA) said:

It is true that students in my zone are underprivileged and their English standard is not up to the expected level. But after the ELSP, I can observe that teachers and students in all the schools are trying to use more English in the speaking classes. But, I did not see the same change before the ELSP and also in the reading and writing classes (INL/KAL/ISA).

These comments suggest that while students at different type of schools were exposed to English to varying extent following the introduction of ELSP, exposure to English was generally higher than classes where other skills were taught.

It should be noted that there was no observational data available to support this ISA's claim about the use of language in the reading and writing classes, since this study did not include observation of teaching activities in the reading and writing classes. However, all the participants at the intervening level were of the same opinion that since the introduction of the ELSP, English was used more as the language of instruction in the speaking classes than other classes even though students were not exposed to English to the same extent in different types of schools.

The decision to test speaking might be one of the reasons for the increased use of English in the classroom activities, and the interview participants also confirmed that the situation was not same when compared to before the change and also when compared to reading and writing classes.

4.4.4 Approaches to the assessment of speaking

All the participants commented on teachers' change of approach to assessment of speaking. Their comments show that the number of speaking assessments conducted in a school term increased and reported that the way assessments were conducted had also changed.

INL/BC/ISA commented the SBA for speaking. He indicated:

I would say that now the number of assessments for speaking conducted in a term increased. Now teachers conduct nearly five to six assessments in a term (INL/BC/ISA).

Another In-Service Advisor, INL/PAT/ISA, explained the changes in the way speaking assessments were being conducted since the introduction of ELSP and the associated assessment change:

How the teachers assess speaking has now completely changed. The students are now given tasks for speaking in individual or group work activities in the classroom. They are assessed only for their speaking ability but not for reading or writing as was the case in the past (INL/PAT/ISA).

All these comments suggest that the decision to test speaking brought changes in many aspects of teachers' classroom activities. The teachers, according to the interviewees, spent more time in planning their speaking lessons and assessment activities than before the assessment change. They used more group work activities, and provided more class time for student involvement in speaking activities. In addition, the participants said that they had also observed changes in the use of English in classroom interaction and an increase in the use of speaking activities in the prescribed textbook (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.3). Their comments also

suggested that the number of SBAs held in a term had increased alongside changes in the way that SBAs were conducted.

4.5 Responsibilities

The participants commented on their responsibilities in the implementation of change. Seven of the ten participants felt that their responsibilities under the ELSP were not a burden but part of their duty. However, three of the participants expressed different opinions about their responsibilities. They felt that they had experienced difficulties in carrying out their duties, at least at the introductory stage of the assessment change.

One of the Assistant Directors of Education, INL/BCO/ADE commented on the question of whether his responsibilities under the ELSP had put any extra pressure on him:

Definitely not, I am happy with the introduction of ELSP and with the idea of testing speaking. Speaking in English is very much needed for employment opportunities and higher studies for our children. This is a welcome initiation by the government (INL/BCO/ADE).

INL/KAL/ADE commented on the support of the school administration in implementing the change:

The school administration has also been very helpful in my duties to monitor the implementation of speaking activities with the help of In-service Advisors and Master Trainers. The government has spent a lot of money to train the resource persons and to provide all necessary resources to implement the change. Therefore, it is my duty to help teachers and students in their teaching and learning activities of speaking. I am happy that I am also a part of this new venture (INL/KAL/ADE).

One of the participants (INL/KAL/MT) described his duties in the capacity of a MT as follows:

I visit schools and observe how teachers handle speaking activities in the classroom. When teachers need further assistance in teaching and assessing speaking, I organise training sessions in the RESC² where teachers watch video recordings of speaking lessons and have discussions with other teacher participants about the video lessons and then teachers conduct model speaking classes among their colleagues under my supervision. I should also prepare reports of the progress of implementation of new change. Based on these reports the officials would decide whether there would any further change be required for the new change to achieve its objectives (INL/KAL/MT).

He further commented on his duties:

I accept that these are additional responsibilities put onto us but I am very much prepared to take up this challenge and I will do my part for the change to go further (INL/KAL/MT).

One of the participants expressed a different opinion about his duties under the ELSP. A Master Trainer, INL/BC/MT, commented on the difficulties that he had experienced in performing his duties:

Since the implementation of ELSP in 2011, I have been visiting schools to monitor the new change. I do not say that I am doing my duties without any difficulties because most of our teachers are reluctant to adapt to the new change. I have difficulties in making changes in teachers. I could observe that some teachers especially with long years of experience are still practising the same way to teach speaking. They focus only on reading and writing even in the speaking classes. They never try to introduce group work activities or any other innovations in the class. I do not blame anyone. You cannot expect a sudden change in teachers' thinking and their approaches to teaching speaking. I think that it will take some time for the teachers to change their long-term teaching practices (INL/BC/MT).

The comments suggest that the ingrained attitudes and practices of teachers (especially those with many years of experience) in relation to teaching speaking

²The Regional English Support Centre (RESC) works within the National Institute of Education (NIE) to strengthen support, management and training for English teachers in the region.

worked against the intended changes that students should be provided with more speaking opportunities in their speaking classes.

One Assistant Director of Education, INL/PAT/ADE, identified another difficulty that a shortage of staff placed an extra burden on others and had a negative effect on the implementation of change:

There are no Master Trainers in this zone and the ISA is looking after the duties of the Master Trainer. At the start, he felt that he was overloaded with duties because teachers and students were not well aware of the changes. But now, he does not complain about the extra responsibilities given to him. It may be because the teachers and students are slowly getting used to the change. I am not over optimistic that shortage of resource persons does not affect the new change (INL/PAT/ADE).

One Master Trainer, INL/BCO/MT, also expressed some difficulties in performing his own duties:

At the beginning the teachers did not have a good idea about this programme. They found it difficult to come out from such talk and chalk methods in teaching. I had a hard time to change their teaching methods but now the situation has been changing (INL/BCO/MT).

INL/BCO/MT went on to comment that workshops conducted by the Master Trainers were useful to solve problems in teachers' lesson planning and assessment strategies for speaking activities. He was of the opinion that now teachers were able to change their way of teaching and to adapt the content of speaking lessons to suit the need and ability of students and available classroom facilities.

The intervening level participants' comments suggest that they were happy to perform their responsibilities under the change within the ELSP, but that a variety of factors, such as teachers' resistance to changing their teaching practices, their lack of experience in teaching and assessing speaking activities, and also shortage

of personnel to monitor and guide teaching and learning activities in the classroom, presented obstacles to them in fulfilling their responsibilities.

4.6 NTS and SBA

The intervening level participants perceived that teachers' attitudes and classroom practices in relation to teaching speaking had changed. The changes were mostly as intended, but when asked to comment on whether the changes observed had come about as a result of the SBA or the planned changes to the NTS, the participants expressed different opinions.

An In-Service Advisor, INL/BCO/ISA, expressed the fact that the teacher training and decision to test speaking at the national level and in the school level had brought about changes in teachers. In her view, it was certain that both the NTS and the SBA had influenced teaching activities:

Before ELSP, speaking lessons were conducted like reading lessons. In role play activities in speaking lessons, teachers expected students to write about a topic and to read out to the class. But after the ELSP, the teacher training and importance given to test speaking, teachers changed their way of teaching and prepare activities to provide students more speaking opportunities (INL/BCO/ISA).

However, it was hard for her to say whether the NTS or the SBA might have influenced teachers more:

I am very sure that school based test and public test of speaking influenced teachers' activities in the classroom but I am not sure whether the SBA or the NTS would have influenced the teachers more (INL/BCO/ISA).

The comments of a Master Trainer, INL/BC/MT, were different to that of INL/BCO/ISA. He was of the opinion that the NTS would have more effect on teachers, but only when teachers believed that it would be held soon.

In most of the public examinations students are rewarded and they get certificates for their performance. Their performance has an effect not only on themselves but on everyone; teachers, parents, school administration and advisors and administrators. So I think when teachers and students feel that the NTS is definitely going to happen, they will surely focus more and more on the NTS related activities (INL/BC/MT).

An Assistant Director of Education, INL/ADE/KAL, on the other hand, viewed both to be equally important. He said:

Teachers and students know that to perform well at the NTS, they should practice with more SBA. So my opinion is that it is not whether it is the school level or the national level but they [teachers and students] give equal importance for any examination (INL/ADE/KAL).

The comments suggested that the interviewees generally believed that the decision to test speaking and the relevant teacher training provided were the key reasons for the changes observed in the teachers' attitudes and classroom practices with reference to teaching speaking, but the participants have mixed opinions about whether it was the SBA or the NTS that had the greater influence on bringing about the changes observed in teachers.

4.7 Postponement of the NTS

It should be noted that the first NTS was planned to take place in 2012. When the data collection for this study took place in 2013, the teachers were not officially informed as to whether the NTS would be held in 2013, but they were only aware that it was postponed. However, the proposed NTS has never been implemented and it was announced in 2015 that it would be postponed indefinitely (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5).

The interview participants were of different opinions concerning the postponement of the NTS. Most of the participants expressed concerns that the postponement of the NTS would create doubts in the mind of teachers and students that the new system of assessment might be abandoned as had happened in the past (see Chapter 1 – section 1.4).

INL/BC/MT expressed his concerns about postponement of the NTS:

I am not happy about the delays in the final test. Whenever, I visit schools the teachers and students want to know about the final test. They always want ‘When, Where and How’ it is going to happen (INL/BC/MT).

He accepted difficulties in implementing a change into the existing system, but at the same time he expressed his concerns:

I can understand the practical difficulties in conducting speaking test for nearly three hundred thousand students. It is not an easy task but my concern is that teachers and students will lose their interest that they show now in speaking activities. It will definitely be going to affect all the hard work done to bring this programme to this level by many people (INL/BC/MT).

Some other participants, on the other hand, felt that it was good to have some time before the introduction of the NTS because it would be provide a welcome interlude for teachers, students and administrators to thoroughly understand their duties and expectations in the new system of assessment.

One Assistant Director of Education, INL/KAL/ADE, expressed his views about the postponement of the NTS:

You need more time for planning and for implementing an important task like this [testing speaking at the national level]. I have no objection in the postponement of speaking at the national level (INL/KAL/ADE).

Overall, then, the participants had different opinions on the effect of the postponement on teachers' focus on teaching speaking. Some considered that the postponement would allow teachers to get used to the change, while others were concerned that the prolonged delay would create uncertainty in teachers' minds.

4.8 Uncertainty about the weighting of the SBA

It should also be noted that, it was planned that the assessment of speaking, comprising a combination of the SBA and the NTS, would make up 20% of the final grade for English in the GCE O level. However, it was not clearly stated what weighting the SBA mark would have as part of the 20%.

Most of the intervening level participants were concerned about the weighting of the SBA.

INL/BCO/ADE commented on the importance of SBA of speaking:

SBA is an alternative way of assessing speaking. It [SBA] has many advantages over the national testing of speaking. It [SBA] is conducted in their [teachers' and students] familiar environment and students can have more than one SBAs and the average of the total marks can be considered to make up the final marks. However, the NTS does not have these advantages (INL/BCO/ADE).

He then expressed his concerns about the uncertainty of the SBA's weighting:

However, so far no official announcement made about what percentage of the SBA marks, along with the NTS, reading and writing, will make up the final grade. This will make teachers and students underestimate the importance of the SBA of speaking (INL/BCO/ADE).

His comment on the uncertainty about the weighting suggest that teachers and students may not focus more on the SBA of speaking unless they realise that the SBA marks are important.

4.9 Summary of interview findings in relation to RQ 1

It can be seen from the interviews that the intervening level participants were well aware of the intentions of the policy makers in introducing the change to the existing system of assessment and they were very supportive of the government's decision to test speaking both at the national level and at school level.

Most of the participants were satisfied with the preparations in place for the implementation of the assessment under the ELSP. The new Teacher Guide with lesson plans and assessment tools were welcomed as a useful resource for teachers, and the participants reported that teachers were using it for preparing their lessons and school-based assessments. The teacher training was also said to be useful for teachers in their speaking lessons and assessments.

On the other hand, some participants were not satisfied with the availability of resources needed for the effective implementation of change. Staff shortage was a particular concern as this would place additional burdens on the available staff and prevent them from performing their responsibilities as expected. The participants also expressed concerns about the length of teacher training. They suggested that the training was not enough for making sufficient changes in teachers because of its short length.

The participants noted changes in teachers' attitudes and classroom practices in relation to teaching speaking following the assessment change. Several reasons were suggested for such changes among teachers. The targeted teacher training and the new Teacher Guide were believed to have helped the teachers in planning their teaching and assessment activities. It was also said that the decision to test speaking

had led teachers and students to focus more on speaking. The interviewees generally felt that both the SBA and the NTS had influence on teaching and learning activities, but there was no clear indication of whether it was the SBA or the NTS that had the greater effect on teachers.

While most of the participants reported having observed an increased focus among teachers on speaking activities following the assessment change (the introduction of the SBA and announcement of the NTS), some of them expressed concerns over the postponement of the NTS and the uncertainty about the weighting of the SBA, which may weaken the increased focus on speaking in classes.

The discussion above suggests that there were no important gaps in the intervening level participants translating messages about policy from the decision-making level to the implementing level. The intervening level participants generally felt that teachers' attitudes and practices in relation of teaching speaking had changed as intended, even though these changes were somewhat held back due to factors related to insufficient teacher training, staff shortage, postponement of the first NTS, and the uncertainty about the weighting of the SBA.

Chapter 5 Results and Discussion – Teacher Questionnaire and Student Questionnaire

In this Chapter, the research findings of teacher questionnaire (TQ) and the student questionnaire (SQ) will be discussed. This Chapter first reports on the findings of the teachers' perceptions and then the findings of the students' perceptions of the assessment change.

5.1 Teacher Questionnaire

The questionnaire for the main study was issued in 2013 to explore teachers' attitudes to various aspects of teaching in relation to the assessment change introduced in 2011: the decision to test speaking within the ELSP. This was introduced with the expectation that teachers and students would focus more on speaking since it would be tested at both the national level and the school level (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5). In total, 48 teachers participated in the main questionnaire survey from the three types of schools in four zones in the Batticaloa district (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.1.3 for details about teacher participants).

There were two parts to the teacher questionnaire (see Appendix 6 for teacher questionnaire used in the main study). The TQ was designed to address 12 research themes, divided into 16 categories (see Chapter 3 – section 3.7.5.1).

In the questionnaire, Questions 1 to 5 aimed to gather demographic information on the participants. Responses involved making a choice under each category.

Questions 6 to 16 related to teachers' perceptions of and reactions to the new system of assessment. Responses to these items were on a five point Likert scale of

agreement where 5 represents strongly agree/very much/all (100%) and 1 represents strongly disagree/not at all/none (0%).

Questions 17 to 18 were open ended questions about the NTS and the SBA. There was also a space for the teachers to write any further comments about the ELSP that they felt were important, but that had not been covered in the questionnaire (see Appendix 18 for a questionnaire response from one of the teacher participants).

5.2 Demographic information about the teacher respondents

The five aspects of teachers' characteristics included in the teacher survey questionnaire were: gender, age, number of years of teaching, academic qualifications, and professional qualifications. The teachers' demographic information is presented in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Characteristics of the respondents to the questionnaire survey

Items	Variables	N = 48
1.Gender	Male	28
	Female	20
2.Age	Under 25	0
	25-35	22
	36-45	24
	46-55	1
	56 or over	1
3.Years of teaching	1-5 years	12
	6-10 years	9
	More than 10 years	27
4.Highest Academic qualifications	O level	3
	A level	31
	Bachelor's degree	14
	Master's degree	0
	Others	Reading for MA in TESL, Diploma in English, Higher National Diploma in Accountancy and Diploma in Business Administration.
5.Professional qualifications	Teachers' training certificate	36
	Diploma- College of Education	6
	Post Graduate Diploma in Education	6
	Others	Cambridge University Examination (Teaching Knowledge Test – TKT) and Higher National Diploma in English.

A purposive sampling technique (see Chapter 3 - section 3.4) was used in the selection of teachers for the survey. 12 of the 48 teachers also participated in the

classroom observation phase of the study (Chapter 3 – section 3.4.1.3 for details about implementing level participants). Consent was sought from teachers for their participation in both the questionnaire survey and classroom observations (see Appendix 1 and 2 for information sheet and consent form used in the questionnaire survey similar to the one used in the interviews).

28 of the 48 teachers were male and 20 were female. The participants came from a range of age groups. A range of ages represented: half (N = 24) were in the 36 – 45 year-old range, 22 were in the 25 – 35 range, and 2 teachers were within the 46 – 55 range or over. Their teaching experience and educational and professional qualifications also varied. 27 had been in the English teaching service for more than 10 years, and 12 had been in service for 6 – 10 years. 9 teachers had 1 – 5 years of teaching experience.

The teachers surveyed held academic qualifications such as GCE O level (N = 3), GCE A level (N = 31), Bachelor's degree (N = 14), but no teachers held a Master's degree. One of the teacher participants mentioned that he/she was reading for a MA in TESL (Teaching of English as a Second Language), and other academic qualifications included a Diploma in English, a Higher National Diploma in Accountancy and a Diploma in Business Administration.

36 of the sampled teachers were professionally subject trained in English³. Among the 12 others, half held a Diploma level professional qualification obtained from a

³ Newly recruited English teachers are undergoing teacher training at the English Teachers' Training colleges.

College of Education⁴ and others held a Post Graduate Diploma in Education⁵. Other professional qualifications mentioned included a Cambridge English Language Assessment Examination (Teaching Knowledge Test- TKT) and a Higher National Diploma in English.

The analysis of demographic information about teachers shows that they represented a range of age groups and various educational and professional qualifications with a variety of length of service.

5.3 Teachers' perceptions of the assessment change (Question 6 to 18)

There were thirteen questions (Question 6 to 18) related to teachers' perceptions of the assessment change that they had noticed in their own teaching activities and in their students' learning activities.

Under each question, there was a space for the teachers to add any comments or to write reasons for their answers.

5.3.1 Teachers' degree of approval of the developments within the ELSP (Question 6: *How far do you approve of the following developments within the ELSP?* N = 48)

The results are presented in Table 5.2 below.

⁴ After GCE A levels those who are qualified, enrolled in the Colleges of Education for a three year course and after the course they would be appointed as English teachers.

⁵ A professional teacher qualification obtained from universities, open universities or National Institute of Education.

The policy makers' intentions for the ELSP were that the decision to assess speaking at two levels (National and school level) would make teachers and students focus more on speaking activities in the classroom.

Table 5.2 Teachers' degree of approval of the developments within the ELSP

Developments within ELSP	Strongly approve (n)	Approve (n)	Undecided (n)	Disapprove (n)	Strongly disapprove (n)
A. The emphasis is on learning speaking in the ELSP	25	23	0	0	0
B. The emphasis is on the National Test of Speaking in the GCE O/Level.	15	28	4	1	0
C. The emphasis is on the School Based Assessment of Speaking in the GCE O/Level.	20	24	3	1	0

The data show that all the 48 participants agreed that the emphasis within the ELSP should be on learning speaking.

Many reasons were given by the participants for their approval of the emphasis on speaking within the ELSP.

Teachers' responses suggest that the ELSP motivates both teachers and students to focus on speaking activities in the classroom. Some of the representative view points of the teachers:

- The primary objective of learning a language is oral communication with others (IML/BCO/1C/AN/Y);
- The ELSP motivates the teachers and students to focus more on speaking skills (IML/BC/1C/OA/Y).

Teachers' comments also suggest that they were supportive of assessments of speaking within the ELSP:

- Speaking is important so I consider all levels [the school level and the national level] of assessments (IML/BC/1AB/OB/Y).

The participants also commented on the NTS and the SBA. 43 of the 48 teachers responded either strongly approve (N = 15) or approve (N = 28) that speaking should be tested at the national level and 44 responded either strongly approve (N = 20) or approve (N = 24) that speaking should be tested at the school level. The participants who approved that speaking should be tested at two levels in the GCE O level made the following comments:

- Speaking and listening were ignored for a long time by all [officials, teachers and students] (IML/BC/NS/MB/Y);
- Only testing makes the students work on it (IML/PAT/NS/PA/Y);
- As, it [speaking] is going to be one of the components of the GCE O level examination in the future, we [teachers] have started to focus more on speaking (IML/BCO/1AB/CE/X);
- Students will not speak, unless they are tested (IML/BCO/1C/AN/X).

These comments show that many teachers believed that speaking skills had been ignored for a long time (perhaps because they were not tested).

A small number of the participants, 4 of the 48 teachers responded that they were undecided about the emphasis being placed on the NTS and 3 responded that they were undecided about the emphasis being placed on the SBA.

Only 1 of 48 participants was disapproving of the emphasis being placed on the NTS and 1 was disapproving of the emphasis on the SBA. The participants who did not approve the intentions of the policy makers that the focus should be on the NTS and on the SBA within the ELSP suggested that since the ability of students in speaking English was poor, assessments would negatively reflect on their performance:

- Students are poor in their English standard, so testing speaking will affect their grades in the GCE O level (IML/PAT/1C/KA/X);
- Emphasis on the NTS would affect their [students'] O level results and it will negatively reflect on their future academic and professional career (IML/ BC/1AB/OB/X).

The teachers' written comments suggest that they were concerned about the students' standard of English, which they felt might affect the students' performance in the GCE O level.

The comparison of data on teachers' degree of approval of the developments within the ELSP by different types of schools as shown in Table 5.3 below indicates that a marginal number of participants in the National schools (N=3) and in the 1C schools (N=1) remained undecided about the testing of speaking, and of the two participants who disapproved of the government intentions for testing of speaking were from the 1AB and 1C schools.

**Table 5.3 Teachers' degree of approval of the developments within the ELSP,
by school type (N=16)**

Developments within ELSP	Types of schools	Strongly approve (n)	Approve (n)	Undecided (n)	Disapprove (n)	Strongly Disapprove (n)
A. The emphasis is on learning speaking in the ELSP	National	8	8	0	0	0
	1AB	9	7	0	0	0
	1C	8	8	0	0	0
B. The emphasis is on the National Test of Speaking in the GCE O/Level.	National	6	7	3	0	0
	1AB	3	12	0	1	0
	1C	6	9	1	0	0
C. The emphasis is on the School Based Assessment of Speaking in the GCE O/ Level.	National	7	7	2	0	0
	1AB	6	9	1	0	0
	1C	7	8	0	1	0

The above Table 5.3 shows that all of the participants in all three types of schools were supportive of the emphasis on speaking within the ELSP and this is in line with the intentions of the government.

The participants' responses regarding the emphasis on the NTS and the SBA, however, indicate that some remained undecided and some disapproved of the government intentions to test speaking at the national level and that these teachers were from all three types of school.

5.3.2 Teachers perceptions of the changes to teaching and learning speaking activities.

(Question 7: How far do you agree with the following statements about changes you have noticed since the introduction of the ELSP? N = 48)

The teachers' responses are presented in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4 Teachers' perception of the changes to aspects of teaching and learning speaking

	Strongly agree (n)	Agree (n)	Undecided (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly disagree (n)
A. I focus more on teaching speaking than before.	17	27	3	1	0
B. My students focus more on learning speaking than before.	7	31	5	5	0
C. I use more of the speaking activities in the Year 11 (GCE O/L) - English Pupil's Book than before.	6	31	6	5	0
D. I use more of the speaking activities in the Year 11- English Pupil's Workbooks than before.	5	23	12	8	0
E. I use more of the speaking activities in the Teacher Guide: Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English.	17	27	2	2	0
F. I have changed my methods of teaching speaking (how I teach).	17	23	6	2	0
G. I focus more on teaching speaking for the GCE O/Level than before.	14	26	6	2	0
H. I base my teaching mainly on the activities which are going to be tested in the National Speaking Test.	8	29	5	5	1
I. I base my teaching mainly on the activities which are being tested in the School Based Assessment.	9	29	6	2	2
J. Students' speaking skills are better compared with than before.	13	25	7	3	0
K. Students enjoy speaking activities more than before.	15	26	5	2	0

The above results show the attitudinal and behavioural changes that the teachers had observed in aspects of their own teaching speaking activities and students' learning activities since the introduction of the ELSP. Most of the teachers' responses to all the statements in Question 7 were either in the 'strongly agree' or 'agree' categories.

Among the additional reasons suggested by teachers, the mention of the National Test of Speaking suggests that the planned NTS was one of the factors that encouraged at least some teachers to focus more on teaching speaking within the ELSP:

- Speaking was neglected in the classroom, now [after the ELSP] I mainly focus on it (IML/BC/1AB/OC/Y);
- Preparing the students for the National Test of Speaking (IML/BC/NS/MB/X).

The participants expressed their views about students' focus on learning speaking:

- Children are more interested in learning English [speaking] than before (IML/KAL/NS/CH/Y);
- Students like to speak in English more than before, because there are assessments of speaking in each term (IML/PAT/1C/TH/Y).

From the teachers' point of view, it seems that students had become more interested in speaking since the introduction of the ELSP. One of the participants above, (IML/PAT/1C/TH/Y) suggested that the reason might be the decision to test speaking within the ELSP.

Teachers also suggested about the assessments of speaking. Their comments suggest that as they reported, students started to focus more on speaking since the assessment change and students were more supportive to test speaking at school

level, and their comments suggest their concerns about the continual postponement of the NTS:

- It [SBA] paves room for students to enhance their knowledge in speaking in a free environment (IML/KAL/NS/VM/X);
- [Teachers are] focusing more on teaching speaking than before and the student are paying keen interest on learning the speaking skills but they will lose interest if there will be no National test in the near future (IML/BCO/1AB/CE/X).

Teachers also commented on classroom materials (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.3).

In relation to the Teacher Guide: Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English, they said:

- They are more useful than the English Pupil's Books (IML/KAL/1C/KI/X);
- In the Resource Material sample dialogues and guidelines have been given on how to do speaking activities (IML/BC/NS/AL/X).

The data on the English Pupil's Workbook (D in Table 5.4 above) also showed that teachers started to use more speaking activities from the English Pupil's Workbook than before the decision to test speaking within the ELSP, even though the number of teachers who was 'strongly agree' (N=5) and 'agree' (N=23) was only slightly higher than those who 'undecided' (N=12) and 'disagree' (N=8). One teacher commented:

- There are many activities [in the English Pupil's Workbook] suitable for Year 11 students to improve their speaking skills (IML/BCO/NS/CC/Y).

These comments suggest that at least some teachers found the Teacher Guide more useful for teaching speaking activities than the English Pupil's Books. It needs to be stated that the Teacher Guide was prepared to assist teachers with more speaking activities and to provide SBA tools for spoken English with guidelines for teachers (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.3 for details about Teacher Guide).

The teachers also commented on the effect of the assessment change on their methods of teaching. Their comments suggest that the assessment change made them change their method of teaching:

- The method of teaching should attract the students' focus towards speaking skills. Therefore, we [teachers] must use very innovative methods (IML/BC/1C/OA/Y);
- Now focus is given to speaking, so automatically changes have to be made in teaching methods (IML/BCO/1C/AN/X).

The teachers' comments suggest that they believed that their methods of teaching changed because of the focus given to teaching speaking.

The participants also made comments after responding to Question 7. Some of the comments suggested that the students had found it difficult to adapt to the assessment change for various reasons such as their poor English speaking ability and because the environment they lived in was not supportive in developing their speaking skills:

- Most of the students are facing problems in speaking due to their environment where they are living and where they are studying (IML/BC/1C/OA/X);
- Because students are poor in speaking skills than reading/writing (IML/BC/1AB/OB/Y).

The participants also commented on other shortcomings which prevented the successful implementation of the assessment change:

- There are shortages for English teachers in schools and at the same time many teachers of English are not good at spoken English (IML/BC/1AB/OB/X).

These comments suggest that the implementation of the assessment change might be hindered because of the student and teacher factors discussed above.

However, not all the participants experienced the same challenges connected with lack of exposure to English and shortages for resources. One of the teachers working in a National school commented on focus on speaking before the assessment change:

- Usually I use English in the classroom, so it is not very difficult for me and my children (IML/BCO/NS/VI/X).

Even though, most of the teachers experienced challenges connected with students' poor speaking skills, at least some of the teachers did not experience the same challenge.

5.3.3 Teachers' perceptions of the "80hr Teacher Training on Speaking Skills"

(Question 8: Please grade each of these statements about the "80hr Teacher Training on Speaking English" course offered by the Ministry of Education on teaching speaking skills within the ELSP. N = 48)

The teachers' responses are shown in Table 5.5 below.

It should be remembered that this teacher training course was organised by the Ministry of Education and was conducted by the Master Trainers to assist the English teachers in teaching and assessing speaking skills within the assessment change (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5 for details about teacher training).

Table 5.5 Teacher training

	Very much (n)	A lot (n)	Somewhat (n)	A little (n)	Not at all (n)
A. The training has helped me to improve my ability to teach speaking skills	15	21	11	1	0
B. The training has helped me to improve my ability to assess speaking skills	12	23	8	5	0
C. I use the ideas from the training to teach speaking in my classes	13	22	8	5	0
D. I use the ideas from the training to set practice tasks for School Based Assessment of Speaking	8	25	10	4	1
E. I use the ideas from the training to set practice tasks for National Test of Speaking	11	19	12	5	1

It can be seen that, in general, a high proportion of teachers considered that the teacher training helped them to improve their ability to teach speaking and they used the ideas from the training course in their assessment of speaking. The reasons for their reactions were explained in their written comments:

- 80 hour teacher training on speaking English has given us [the teachers] an opportunity to plan our speaking activities [teaching and assessment] effectively (IML/BCO/NS/VI/X);
- I use the skills gained in the training to teach speaking, especially the slow learners are mostly benefited (IML/PAT/1C/TH/Y).

A smaller number of teachers (12 to 18 depending on the specific question) felt that the training did not help them in their teaching and they did not use the ideas from the training for assessment of speaking. One reason for this was suggested by one of the participants:

- The programme was organised to train the teachers but there were many controversies about the short duration of the training and about the abilities of the resource persons (IML/BCO/1C/AN/Y).

It can be inferred from this comment that a longer period of training and trainers with more skills in teacher training might have made the training course more helpful and useful for the teaching and assessment of speaking.

5.3.4 English as a Life Skill Programme on the National Rupavahini Television

(Question 9: Please grade each of these statements about the “English as a Life Skill Programme” that has been telecast on the National Rupavahini Television on Saturdays at 7pm. N = 48)

The English as a Life Skill Programme telecast on the National Rupavahini Television was organised by the Ministry of Education in order to mobilize the talent and expertise from within the Sri Lankan education system (see also Chapter 4 – section 4.3 for details about the television programme).

The participants’ reactions to the TV programme are shown in Table 5.6 below.

Table 5.6 ELSP on National Television

	Very much (n)	A lot (n)	Somewhat (n)	A little (n)	Not at all (n)
A. The programme has helped me to improve my ability to teach speaking skills	8	25	10	4	1
B. I use the ideas from the programme to teach speaking in my classes	9	23	12	4	0
C. I use the ideas from the programme to set practice tasks for School Based Assessment of Speaking	7	20	11	9	1
D. I use the ideas from the programme to set practice tasks for National Test of Speaking	9	16	11	11	1

From the above results, it can be seen that the majority of teachers felt that the programme had helped them ‘very much’ or ‘a lot’ to improve their ability to teach speaking, and they used the ideas from the programme in their teaching and

assessment of speaking skills. The reasons for their reactions were that the programme helped them to prepare and conduct speaking lessons according to the level of standard of speaking of their students, and the programme itself can be used in the speaking classes:

- It is very useful to show the sub-skills of speaking via videos to students (IML/KAL/NS/VM/X);
- Everything [how to prepare and conduct an activity for speaking lesson] is clearly shown on the television programme. It helps me to improve my teaching and assessing speaking skills a lot (IML/PAT/NS/PA/X).

These comments indicate that some teachers started to look for further resources other than the text books to improve their teaching and assessment of speaking skills.

The minority of teachers (N = 16), however, reported that they had used the ideas somewhat, a little, or not at all in their teaching, twenty-one teachers reported that they had used the ideas somewhat, a little, or not at all in the SBA, and twenty-three teachers reported that they had used the ideas in the NTS. The reasons for their reactions were that the poor language ability of students:

- It is very difficult to adapt the activities shown [in the programme] to classroom teaching as my pupils are poor in language [English] (IML/BCO/1C/AN/Y).

The above written response suggests that the poor English ability of students might have limited teachers' look for further resources for their teaching speaking.

5.3.5 Speaking activities covered in the Pupil's Books and Pupil's Workbook

(Question 10: Think of the units you taught in your English classes in the first and second term of 2013. How many speaking activities did you use? N= 48).

The following Table 5.7 shows the results of number of speaking activities that teachers discussed in the classroom during particular school terms.

The policy makers alleged that English teachers did not focus on the speaking activities in the English Pupil's Books and English Pupil's Workbook and that they concentrated only on the skills which were tested (Chapter 1 –section 1.5). Hence, one of the expectations within the ELSP was that the decision to test speaking would make the teachers use more activities in the prescribed books in their speaking classes.

It needs to be remembered that the Teacher Guide was specially prepared within the ELSP with lesson plans and SBA tools for speaking skills (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.3 for details about the Teacher Guide).

Table 5.7 Speaking activities discussed during the first and second school term of 2013

	All: 100% (n)	Most : 75% (n)	Half: 50% (n)	A few: 25% (n)	None: 0% (n)
A. In the Year 11- English Pupil's Books	4	13	22	9	0
B. In the Year 11- English Pupil's Workbook	2	9	21	14	2
C. In the Teacher Guide- Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English	3	18	20	7	0

The results show that among the teacher participants, 39 of them covered half or more than half of the speaking activities in the English Pupil's Book and 32 of them covered half or more than half of the activities in the English Pupil's Workbook and 41 of them covered activities in the Teacher Guide among the activities which they were supposed to cover within first two terms of 2013. This shows that, the majority of teachers reported having covered half or more than half of the speaking activities

in the teaching materials which they were expected to use in their teaching and learning activities in the classroom. However, the activities in the English Pupil's workbook were least used.

In response to Question 10-D (**Did you use any other speaking activities?**), 35 of the 48 participants chose 'Yes' and 1 participant chose 'No' and 12 did not respond to the question.

Question 10-E asked respondents to state what the other speaking activities had been. 36 of the 48 respondents stated that they had used more than one types of speaking activities. Responses included many types of activities such as dialogue (N = 11), role play (N = 5), picture description (N = 7), interview (N = 22), questions and answers (exchanging information/information gap activities) (N = 11), debates (N = 5), storytelling (N = 4), and so on. The activities that the teachers used in the speaking lessons show that the teachers did not focus exclusively on a particular type or types of activities.

25 of the 48 teachers also answered Question 10-F (**Where did you choose them from?**). Their answers show that they obtained their speaking activities from various sources: browsing the internet, books and news-papers, television channels and so on as well as teacher guides and resource materials.

Question 10-G (**Why did you choose them?**) was posed in order to establish whether choice of materials was directly related to the NTS and the SBA, but no teachers mentioned testing purposes in their responses. However, some did mention that the selected materials would help them to create students' interest in speaking, and the materials would also help students to improve their speaking ability:

- Create interest and motivate students (IML/ BCO/1C/ AR/ X);
- Improve speaking ability of students (IML/ BC/1AB/ OC/ Y).

The discussions suggest that the teachers started to use speaking activities in the prescribed books and looked for speaking activities from various sources since the introduction of the ELSP.

5.3.6 Factors influencing the choice of speaking activities

(Question 11: *How much were your choices of speaking activity within the ELSP in your classes influenced by the following factors? N = 48*)

The participants' responses are shown in Table 5.8 below.

Table 5.8 Factors influencing the selection of speaking activities

	Very much (n)	A lot (n)	Somewhat (n)	A little (n)	Not at all (n)
A. Teacher Guide: Resource material for Teaching Spoken English	13	22	13	0	0
B. Teaching syllabus	7	20	15	5	1
C. English Pupil's Books	7	20	13	7	1
D. English Pupil's Workbook	6	19	14	8	1
E. The National Test of Speaking	3	22	15	7	1
F. The Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking	7	27	8	5	1
G. Lack of teaching learning aids	9	21	15	3	0
H. Lack of classroom facilities	11	14	18	4	1
I. Professional training	6	16	17	7	2
J. Students' current English level	6	13	18	10	1
K. The assistance of In-Service Adviser	4	20	12	5	7
L. The assistance of Master Trainer	1	18	15	8	6
M. The assistance from school principal	4	24	13	4	3

The data show that 35 of the 48 teachers felt that the Teacher Guide influenced their selection of speaking activities ‘very much’ (N=13) or ‘a lot’ (N=22). The data also show that 34 of the 48 teachers felt that the SBA influenced their selection of speaking activities ‘very much’ (N=7) or ‘a lot’ (N=27) the latter category attracted the highest number of responses across all factors listed. It was expected that the NTS would influence teachers more than any other factors due to its high-stakes nature, but only 25 teachers said the NTS influenced them ‘very much’ (N=3) or ‘a lot’ (N=22). The continual postponement might explain why teachers considered it less influential than the SBA.

The other factors teachers generally felt had less influence on their selection of speaking activities were students’ current English level, lack of classroom facilities, and teaching aids. This contrasts with teacher responses to Question 6 above, when listing reasons for not approving the NTS and the SBA as points of emphasis within the ELSP. Some teachers did not approve of the intentions of policy makers that the NTS and the SBA should be emphasised within the ELSP because of the reasons that students’ poor English standard and lack of classroom facilities might affect their performances at the examinations as discussed in section 5.3.1 above.

In response to Question 11-N (**Which of the points (A-M) listed in Q11 was the main influence on your choices of speaking activities?**), 42 of the 48 teachers mentioned factors:

Teacher Guide (N=15), Students’ current English level (N=9), Lack of classroom facilities (N=4), Teaching syllabus (N=3), and 2 teachers each suggested that English Pupil’s Book, the NTS, the SBA, and professional training had influenced

their choices of speaking activities, and 1 teacher each suggested that it was English Pupil's Workbook, lack of teaching learning aids, and the assistance of In-Service Adviser influential in their choices of speaking activities.

Among the many factors, the teachers suggested the Teacher Guide was the most influential in their choice of speaking activities. The reasons for the influence of Teacher Guide, as some of the teachers reported, were that it contained guidelines on lesson plans for speaking activities, and also tools for SBA.

Some teachers also responded to Question 11-O (**Why? Please specify your reasons for your answer to Q11-N**):

The teachers, who suggested that the Teacher Guide was influential specified their reasons that it contained a lot of guide lines for teaching and assessment of speaking activities (IML/ BC/NS/ AL/ X) (IML/ BCO/1AB/ CE/ X).

Teachers, who suggested that the 'Students' current English level' was influential in the choice of speaking activities indicated that most of the students were unable to speak in English, some of them were too shy to speak or that most of the students were from low income earning families and had no chance of speaking (IML/KAL/NS/CH/X), (IML/BCO/1C/AN/Y), (IML/BC/1AB/OC/X).

Some teachers suggested that the National Test of Speaking was influential in their speaking activities because students would focus more on speaking activities when it was made compulsory (IML/BC/NS/MB/Y). The teachers' comments also suggested that the 'Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking' was influential since students focused more on it, because they wanted to score more in the SBA (IML/PAT/1C/TH/Y).

The teachers' comments suggest that they considered many factors to be influential in their choice of speaking activities and that testing was just one of these factors.

5.3.7 Teachers' satisfaction with support available for implementing the change

(Question 12: *How satisfied are you with the following factors involved in the teaching of speaking within the ELSP? N = 48*)

The teachers' responses are shown in Table 5.9 below.

Table 5.9 Teachers' satisfaction with support available

	Fully satisfied (n)	Satisfied (n)	Undecided (n)	Unsatisfied (n)	Very unsatisfied (n)
A. Teaching learning aids	2	35	5	5	1
B. Classroom facilities	0	26	9	8	5
C. Speaking activities in the English Pupil's Workbook	7	27	10	4	0
D. Speaking activities in the English Pupil's Books	5	32	6	5	0
E. Speaking activities in the Teacher guide-Resource material for teaching spoken English	6	29	10	3	0
F. Assistance from Master Trainer	1	28	13	4	2
G. Assistance from In-service Adviser	1	32	9	4	2
H. Assistance from school principal	4	31	11	0	2
I. Students' attitude to learn speaking	8	21	13	5	1
J. Students' current English level	1	28	10	8	1

The general pattern seems to be that teachers were satisfied with the support for teaching speaking since the 2011 change. They commented that it had helped them and the students in the teaching and learning of speaking:

- There is an activity room with internet access set up in the school especially for teaching and learning speaking under this programme [English as a Life Skill Programme]. Students can watch programmes to improve their English (IML/BCO/NS/CC/X);
- The Master Trainer in my zone is very helpful. He helps me in teaching and assessment of speaking (IML/PAT/1C/TT/Y).

Teachers who were ‘unsatisfied’ or ‘very unsatisfied’ with the factors suggested that classroom, student and time related factors were the reasons for their dissatisfaction:

- Classrooms are packed, irregular attendance of students [to school] (IML/KAL/1AB/VA/X);
- We [teachers] have not been given enough time to prepare them [students] [for the NTS] and presently only one class is allocated for a week for teaching speaking (IML/BC/1C/AN/Y).

Even though a small proportion of teachers were not satisfied, most comments reflected satisfaction with the available support for teaching and learning speaking skills since the assessment change.

5.3.8 Factors influencing the focus of teaching and learning

(Question 13: How far do you agree with the following statements about teaching and learning speaking skills within the ELSP? N = 48)

Table 5.10 below shows the teachers’ responses.

Table 5.10 Factors influencing the focus on teaching and learning speaking skills

	Strongly agree (n)	Agree (n)	Undecided (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly disagree (n)
A. The National Test of Speaking has made me focus more on teaching speaking skills.	12	28	6	2	0
B. The School Based Assessment of Speaking has made me focus more on teaching speaking skills.	9	31	5	3	0
C. Teaching speaking in the classroom has made students focus more on learning speaking skills.	12	27	8	1	0
D. The National Test of Speaking makes students focus more on learning speaking.	13	25	7	3	0
E. The Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking makes students focus more on learning speaking.	11	24	8	5	0
F. The skills students learn in the speaking lessons in the classroom within the ELSP are useful to communicate in English with others outside the classroom	14	31	3	0	0

Among the 48 teacher participants, 40 teachers either strongly agree (N=12) or agree (N=28) with the statement that the NTS made them focus more on teaching speaking. The same number of teachers either strongly agree (N=9) or agree (N=31) with the statement that the SBA encouraged them to focus more on teaching speaking.

The same trend was observed in the students' focus on speaking. 39 of the 48 teachers believed, that teaching speaking had made the students focus more on speaking since the assessment change, 38 teachers felt that it was the *NTS* and 35 teachers felt that it was the *SBA* that had made the students focus on speaking skills.

The teachers also felt that the skills learned in the speaking classes would be useful for students to communicate in English with others outside the classroom. That students would be able to communicate in oral English when they leave school was

one of the policy intentions of the ELSP when testing of speaking was introduced to the school system in 2011.

Responses to Question Q13-G (**Please add any comments you would like to add to your answer to Q13**) showed the teachers' positive attitudes towards the decision to test speaking, and suggested both the teachers and students would benefit from the assessment change:

- As English is not spoken in most of the Sri Lankan homes especially in rural homes, these students should be made to hear and speak English in the classroom, so ELSP is a welcome move (IML/BCO/1C/AR/X);
- [The ELSP] is very useful to improve speaking ability of the students as well as the teachers if this [NTS] is carried out no doubt the level of speaking would improve (IML/PAT/1AB/ER/Y).

The data suggest that the government decision to test speaking at two levels – (at national level and at school level) – had a substantial effect on teachers and, as the teachers reported, on students' perceptions of the importance of teaching and learning speaking skills. Teachers generally held positive attitudes towards the decision to test speaking within the ELSP.

5.3.9 Factors influencing the content of lessons

(Question 14: *How much do the following factors influence your choice of what you teach- the content of your lessons- when teaching speaking skills within the ELSP?* N = 48)

Table 5.11 shows the teachers' responses.

Table 5.11 Factors influencing the content of speaking lessons

	Very much (n)	A lot (n)	Somewhat (n)	A little (n)	Not at all (n)
A. Students' expectations	12	20	12	4	0
B. Students' current English level	7	22	13	6	0
C. Class size	8	17	19	3	1
D. Available teaching learning resources in the classroom	4	13	20	9	2
E. National Test of Speaking	5	20	12	10	1
F. Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking	4	22	16	6	0
G. Time that needs to be spent on lesson planning	4	21	16	6	1
H. Time that needs to be spent on teaching and learning aids	7	19	17	4	1

The data show that among the many factors which teachers felt had influenced the content of their teaching, students' expectations (N=32) and students' current English level (N =29) were the most influential.

When teachers were asked to comment on Question 14-I (**Any other factors influence the content of teaching**), they mentioned factors related to teachers, students and other participants in the implementation of change:

- Multi-level class [Ability of students] (IML/PAT/1C/KA/X);
- Support by the senior teachers and school principals (IML/BC/NS/MB/Y).

The data presented (in Table 5.11 above) show that teachers were particularly concerned about students' expectations and students' ability in English as factors influencing the content of their speaking lessons.

5.3.10 Factors influencing methods of teaching

(Q15. How much do the following factors influence your choice of how you teach- methods of teaching- English speaking skills within the ELSP? N = 48)

The results are presented in Table 5.12 below.

Table 5.12 Factors influencing methods of teaching speaking

	Very much (n)	A lot (n)	Somewhat (n)	A little (n)	Not at all (n)
A. Students' expectations	8	22	15	3	0
B. Students' current English level	6	21	13	8	0
C. Class size	7	15	17	9	0
D. Available teaching learning resources in the classroom	5	16	17	9	1
E. National Testing of Speaking	4	21	15	8	0
F. Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking within the ELSP	2	25	16	5	0
G. Time that needs to be spent on lesson planning	3	26	14	5	0
H. Time that needs to be spent on teaching and learning aids	4	26	14	4	0

The data show that among the many factors, students' expectations (N=30), and time needed to be spent on teaching and learning aids (N=30) seemed to be the most influential on the choice of methods of their teaching.

The data also indicate that 29 teachers felt that the need to spend time on lesson planning was also a deciding factor which influenced the methods of teaching in their speaking classes. 25 participants felt that the NTS was influential in their selection of teaching methodology in the speaking classes and 27 felt that the SBA was influential.

The teachers' methods of teaching speaking seemed to have been influenced by many factors including factors related to students, the physical conditions of the classroom, and assessments.

5.3.11 Factors influencing time spent on speaking activities

(Question 16: *How much do the following factors influence the amount of time you spend on teaching speaking English within the ELSP? N = 48*)

The teachers' responses are summarised in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13 Factors influencing time spent on speaking activities

	Very much (n)	A lot (n)	Somewhat (n)	A little (n)	Not at all (n)
A. Students' expectations	8	22	16	2	0
B. Students' current English level	6	21	13	8	0
C. Class size	7	15	19	7	0
D. Available teaching learning resources in the classroom	5	14	18	9	2
E. National Test of Speaking	6	22	14	6	0
F. Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking	1	26	18	3	0
G. Time that needs to be spent on lesson planning	4	24	15	5	0
H. Time that needs to be spent on teaching and learning aids	6	21	12	9	0

The data suggest that 30 of the 48 teachers felt that students' expectations were important to the time they spent on teaching speaking. The NTS (N =28) and the SBA (N =27) were also influential in teachers' decisions about how much time to spend on speaking English. 27 teachers stated that students' current English level and 28 teachers stated that time required for lesson planning were other factors that seemed to have an important influence.

The data suggest that teachers tend to give more importance to students' expectations than other factors such as the NTS and the SBA when spending time on speaking activities.

5.3.12 Any other changes to teachers' attitude to teaching speaking caused by the NTS

(Question 17: Has the National Test of Speaking within the ELSP caused any other changes to your attitude to teaching English or what and how you teach? Please explain your answer?)

A space was provided for comments at the end of the teachers' questionnaire to elicit open, written responses to Question 17.

The comments made in response to Question 17 suggest that teachers started to focus more on speaking since the assessment change because they wanted to prepare students for the NTS:

- Before I gave first priority to writing skills but now [after the introduction of the ELSP], I give equal importance for both writing and speaking skills and allocate separate class for students' speaking skills (IML/PAT/NS/PAT/X);
- The students were ignorant to practice speaking but after the introduction of the National Test of Speaking, I hope the students will work on it (IML/BCO/1C/ AN/X).

The above teachers' comments suggest that the NTS encouraged both teachers and students focus more on speaking skills.

5.3.13 Any other changes to teachers' attitude to teaching speaking caused by the SBA

(Question 18: Has the School Based Assessment of Speaking within the ELSP caused any other changes to your attitude to teaching English or what and how you teach? Please explain your answer?)

The teachers' comments made in response to Question 18 suggest that the SBA brought many changes to their attitude towards teaching speaking and that the SBA was also considered as a practice test for the NTS:

- Yes surely, I can say that the SBA of speaking within the ELSP caused many changes in my attitude. This SBA system encourages both of us [teachers and students] (IML/BC/1C/ OA/Y);
- Because they [students] should face the National test, I give them more school based tests on speaking so that it will be a practice for them (IML/KAL/1C/ KI/X).

These comments suggest that teacher and student attitudes towards teaching and learning speaking did change since the introduction of speaking tests within the ELSP. The comments also suggest that the decision to test speaking influenced teacher attitudes and classroom practices towards the content and method of speaking classes.

However, the teachers also expressed their concerns about the postponement of the NTS. Some of the teachers' comments were:

- Not sure of the test. When? How? (IML/KAL/1C/SA/X);
- We [teachers] do not specifically know about the National Test of Speaking (IML/KAL/1AB/MV/X).

They also expressed their concerns about the weighting of the SBA marks towards the final grading:

- The SBA of English language has become less important, because it has no effect on their [students'] final marks. So it has become a kind of mechanical to students and teachers (IML/BC/1AB/OC/Y).

Finally, the teachers made these comments on the important aspects of the ELSP which they felt had not been covered or emphasised and there were questions did not have the appropriate responses to be selected from in the teacher questionnaire.

Teachers' comments show their concerns about the curriculum for speaking and the continual postponement of the NTS:

- The curriculum for speaking within the ELSP should be incorporated into the school curriculum. Presently, it is treated separately from the school curriculum (IML/BCO/1C/AN/Y);
- The date for the National test of speaking should be informed immediately to make the students keep on focusing on speaking (IML/KAL/1C/SA/Y).

These teachers' suggestions show that they wanted the date of the NTS to be confirmed without delay because continual postponement might lead the ELSP to fail to achieve its intended objective: that is, make students focus on speaking. Their comments also show that they would like to have a revision in the curriculum for English language since having two curricula for one subject aimed at one National test might create confusion.

5.4 Summary of teacher questionnaire findings in relation to RQ 2

This section will first discuss the teacher questionnaire findings, and will then compare the findings with data obtained from the interview with participants at the intervening level.

The teacher questionnaire sought to address Research Question Two: Do the teachers and the students ('implementing level' – level three – participants) share the policy makers' and the intervening level participants' understanding of the intentions behind the introduction of the National Test of speaking and School Based Assessment of Speaking? (see Chapter 3 - section 3.2).

The teacher questionnaire shows that even though all of the participants approved the government intentions that speaking skills should be focused in the classroom teaching and learning, not all of them approved of testing speaking.

Based on the washback literature, there may be a number of reasons for this kind of resistance: factors related to teachers, students and the assessment itself (see Chapter 2 – section 2.4).

However, among these reasons, assessment related factors might have been the most important for some of the teachers who were against the government intentions of testing speaking. The teachers were not familiar with the NTS since no NTS had been held before the data collection.

Even though only a relatively small number of teachers did not approve of the government decision to test speaking, this nonetheless shows that some, regardless of the type of schools they worked in, opposed its introduction (see also section 5.3.1above).

The data show that most of the teachers were satisfied with factors such as the 80hr Teacher Training, 'English as a Life Skill' programme on TV, the Teacher Guide and other classroom and student related factors involved in teaching speaking. However, some teachers were not satisfied with the same factors (see section 5.3.7 above). This is consistent with the findings of previous washback studies that conditions in schools vary and that a particular test and test related factors can affect individual teachers differently (Alderson and Wall 1993, Lam 1994, Watanabe 1996).

The teacher questionnaire also showed that the teachers' focus on speaking, choices of speaking activities, amount of time spent on teaching speaking, content and methods of teaching speaking (at least as reported by teachers) had changed since the assessment change. For example, the teachers focused more on the speaking activities in the Teacher Guide and they equally focused on activities in the English Pupil's Book and Workbook.

The interview data with participants at the intervening level also suggested, that there was a remarkable increase in the use of speaking activities from the prescribed textbooks and based on the survey data, 40 of the 48 teachers (83%) responded that they changed their teaching methodology in the speaking classes (see Table 5.4 above) and the interview data, also suggested that teachers changed their teaching methodology when teaching speaking compared to classes where other skills were taught (see Chapter 4 - section 4.4).

The change would therefore appear to be in line with the policy intentions for the changes in assessment: teachers should focus more on the speaking activities in the English Pupil's Book and Workbook, giving more class time for student interactions, and using more English in the classroom teaching and learning speaking activities, unlike reading and writing classes which have been predominantly teacher-fronted. The data also suggest that both the NTS and the SBA had an effect on their decision to focus more on speaking skills. It was hard to separate which of the two assessments (the SBA and the NTS) had a larger effect on their teaching and learning activities in speaking classes.

It is important to note that when the questionnaire survey was carried out in August 2013, the NTS was not imminent, but it had been announced that it would be held in December 2013. This might explain why both the NTS and the SBA were influential on teachers' focus on speaking, even though the NTS was considered to be more high-stakes than the SBA. These changes in teachers' attitudes and practices towards teaching speaking since the announcement of the decision to test speaking were also confirmed by the participants at the intervening level (see Chapter 4 – section 4.4).

The discussions of the findings from the teacher questionnaire and interviews with participants at the intervening level show that the decision to test speaking within the ELSP influenced teachers' attitudes and classroom practices as intended.

5.5 Results and discussions – Student questionnaire

In this section, the findings of the student questionnaire investigating students' perceptions of the assessment change will be presented. The student questionnaires were issued to the class teachers in September 2013 for the purpose of exploring the students' perceptions of the effect of the NTS and the SBA on their own learning activities and on their teachers' teaching activities. In total, 480 students participated in the main questionnaire survey from the three types of schools in the four zones in the Batticaloa district. It needs to be stated that the teachers (N=48) who received the student questionnaire were the participants in the teacher questionnaire survey and some of them (N=12) were also involved in the classroom observations (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.1.3 for details of selection of participants in the questionnaire survey).

The questionnaire did not elicit any demographic information from the student participants since all of them were of the same age (16 years old) studying in the same year (GCE O level). The student participants recruited in this study were either from boys' schools (N=160), girls' schools (N=200), or mixed schools (N=120). Since, the selection of students depended on the types of schools, the number of students of both genders also varied according to the selected schools.

There were altogether 12 questions in the questionnaire, and space was provided at the end of the student questionnaire to elicit voluntary additional written comments

about the NTS and the SBA. The students were expected to tick the option(s) which they felt applied to them in Question 1 and Question 2. The other questions (Questions 3 to 10), except Question 5, were set on a five-point Likert scale of agreement where *one* is equal to strongly agree and *five* is equal to strongly disagree. In Question 5 *one* is equal to All: 100% and *five* is equal to None: 0%. Under each question from Question 2 to 12, there was a space for the students to add any comments or to write reasons for their answers (see Appendix 7 for the student questionnaire for the main study).

5.5.1 Language used in the speaking classes

(Question1: *What language does your teacher use to teach you speaking skills in your English classes?* N=480)

The students' responses are presented in Table 5.14 below.

Table 5.14 Language used in the speaking classes

Language	%	N=480
A. English only	6	29
B. Mainly English with occasional Tamil	54	259
C. Half English and Half Tamil	38	182
D. Mainly Tamil	2	10

The students' responses concerning the languages used in the speaking classes show that, out of the 480 student participants in the questionnaire survey, 6% (N=29) of students felt that the teachers used 'English only' in the classroom. 54% (N=259) of them felt that it was 'mainly English with occasional Tamil', 38% (N=

182) responded it was ‘half English and half Tamil’, and 2% (N=10) ‘mainly Tamil’.

The results of Question 1 were also compared between the three different types of school. As mentioned in Chapter 3 – section 3.5.1.1, there were three types of schools selected for this research, and there were variations among the three types of schools in terms of availability of teachers and teaching and learning resources. The National schools are considered more elite than the other two types.

The findings concerning the languages used in speaking classes among the three different types of schools and possible interpretations for those findings are discussed below.

5.5.1.1 Language used in the speaking classes in the three types of schools

A total of 160 student participants represented each type of school and their responses to Question 1 are presented in Table 5.15 below.

Table 5.15 Language used in the three types of schools

	National		1AB		1C	
Language	%	N=160	%	N=160	%	N=160
A. English only	3	5	4	6	11	18
B. Mainly English with occasional Tamil	61	98	47	75	54	86
C. Half English and Half Tamil	35	56	48	77	31	50
D. Mainly Tamil	1	1	1	2	4	6

In National schools, the trend is similar to that of the whole sample (presented above) that a large proportion of the students suggested that teachers used mainly

English in their speaking classes. Specifically, 61% (N=98) of students reported that teachers use mainly English with occasional Tamil, a slightly higher percentage than 54% (N=480) in the whole sample as shown in Table 5.14 above.

In 1AB schools, the results indicate that 51% (N=81) of the students suggested that teachers used either 'English only' or 'Mainly English with occasional Tamil' in the speaking classes which was lower than the corresponding percentage of students (64%, N=103) in the National schools.

However, the percentage of students who felt that the teachers used half English and half Tamil in the speaking lessons was higher in the 1AB schools with 48% (N=77) than in the National schools with 35% (N=56).

In 1C schools, the data show that 65% (N=104) of students felt that teachers used 'English only' and 'mainly English with occasional Tamil' in their speaking classes. The finding was also somewhat surprising when compared to the National schools (64%, N=103) and the 1AB (51%, N=81) schools. The general expectation was that a higher percentage of students in the National schools and in the 1AB schools would feel that their teachers use more English than Tamil in the classroom discussions in the speaking lessons than the corresponding percentage of students in 1C schools, since the ability of students in both of these schools were considered to be higher than 1C school students.

5.5.2 Activities used in the speaking lessons

(Question 2: *What type of activities does your teacher use to teach you speaking skills in your English classes?* N=480)

The students were asked to ‘tick’ all the activities that they had encountered in the speaking classes and their responses are presented in Table 5.16 below.

Table 5.16 Activities in the speaking classes

	%	N=480
A. Dialogue	70	336
B. Role plays	44	211
C. Exchanging information (information gap activities/ question and answers)	77	370
D. Recitations	21	101
E. Story telling	40	192
F. Dramas	17	82
G. Descriptions (picture)	44	211
H. Oral presentations	33	158
I. Speeches	38	182
J. Interviews	19	91
K. Debates	20	96
L. Discussions	47	226
M. Any other activities	24	115

The data show that some of the teachers used various types of activities in the speaking classes. Among the activities, the majority of students (77%, N=370) reported that ‘exchanging information’ was used by their teachers and 44% (N = 211) of students reported that ‘picture description’ was used. Among the other activities, 70% of students reported use of ‘dialogue’(dialogues are exchange of ideas and opinions orally between a teacher and students or between group of

students), pair or group of , 47% ‘discussions’ and 44% ‘role plays’ being used by their teachers in speaking classes.

The students also responded to Question 2 – N (**Please specify what the other activities are**). Some of the activities, that the students mentioned as their teachers used to teach them speaking were held within and outside the classroom premises:

- [Loud] reading (IML/PAT/1AB/KV/Y/S);
- Description of charts (IML/PAT/1C/KA/X/S);
- Language games (IML/BC/NS/MB/X/S);
- Street dramas (IML/PAT/1AB/ER/X/S);
- Speech in the morning assembly (IML/PAT/1AB/ER/X/S).

Some of them mentioned that their teachers brought in technology into the classroom to teach speaking:

- Multimedia oral presentations (IML/BC/1C/AM/X/S);
- Watching English films (IML/BC/NS/MB/Y/S);

Some of them specified assessment related activities:

- Conducting model test based activities (IML/BC/1C/AM/Y/S).

The students’ comments suggest that the teachers had started to use a variety of activities in the speaking classes including assessment related activities.

The students also commented on Question 2 – O (**Please specify which activities are used most often**). Among the many activities (A-M) listed above, students felt that it was ‘exchanging information’, their teachers focused on the most.

5.5.3 Materials used in the speaking lessons

(Question 3: *What materials does your teacher use to teach you speaking skills in your English classes?* N=480)

The students' responses are shown in Table 5.17 below.

Table 5.17 Materials used in the speaking classes

	%	N=480
A. English Pupil's Book	81	390
B. English Pupil's Workbook	61	291
C. Past exam question papers	81	388
D. Audio recordings	24	117
E. Video	36	175
F. Pictures and cue cards	50	242
G. Commercial publications	24	114
H. Any other materials	22	106

The data analysis of materials used in the speaking lessons shows that 81% (N=390) of students reported that teachers used the English Pupil's Book in the speaking classes and an equal number of students (81% - N=390) felt that past exam question papers were used by their teachers in the speaking classes. 61% (N = 291) of student participants was of the opinion that their teachers used speaking activities from the English Pupil's Workbook. The students reported that the English Pupil's Workbook was least used in the classroom which was consistent with the teachers' data on Pupil's Workbook (see section 5.3.2 above). The data also suggest that

teachers used audio and video recordings, picture and cue cards, commercial publications and other materials in their speaking classes.

However, it is important to note that there were not any past papers available for teachers particularly related to the NTS since there had not been any NTS held before the main questionnaire survey was done in September 2013. The teachers might have looked for other sources to find past papers similar to the planned NTS or they might have prepared their own set of past papers as suggested by some of the student participants:

- Exam papers prepared by teachers (IML/BC/AM/1C/Y/S).

The students were also asked to respond to Question 3 – I (Please specify what the other materials are). The students specified materials such as:

Printed materials:

- Dictionary (IML/KAL/NS/CH/X/S);
- Brochures (IML/KAL/1AB/VA/Y/S);
- Newspaper (IML/PAT/1AB/ER/Y/S).

Recordings:

- Audio recordings (IML/PAT/1AB/ER/X/S).

Assessment related materials:

- Model exam papers (IML/KAL/NS/VM/Y/S).

The students' responses show that some of their teachers had used a range of materials in the speaking lessons including teacher prepared assessment related materials.

5.5.4 Reasons for learning speaking in the English classes

(Question 4: *Why are you learning speaking in your English classes?* N=480)

The students responded to a question about the reasons for them to learn speaking skills. Their responses are given in Table 5.18 below.

Table 5.18 Reasons for learning speaking

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)
A. To get a better job	66	318	31	149	2	10	*	1	*	2
B. To be able to go to university	55	265	39	188	3	16	2	9	1	2
C. To go abroad for higher studies	57	273	28	134	10	47	**	13	**	13
D. To go abroad to work	40	193	37	176	15	74	4	19	4	18
E. To prepare for the National Test of Speaking	42	201	44	211	9	42	4	20	1	6
F. To prepare for School Based Assessment of Speaking	38	183	48	228	9	44	4	18	1	7
G. To acquire the competence to use English in the day to day activities	40	193	48	230	9	44	1	5	2	8
H. To fulfil parents' expectations	42	199	39	188	9	43	7	34	3	16
I. To have more and better opportunities in the future	65	314	30	142	3	14	1	3	1	7

* Indicates both options (disagree-0.2% and strongly disagree-0.4%) equal to 1%

** Indicates both options (disagree-2.7% and strongly disagree-2.7%) equal to 5%

The data show that among the 480 participants, 97% (N=467) chose either strongly agree or agree that they focused on speaking skills because they wanted to get a

good job and 94% (N=453) participants agreed that the reason for their focus on speaking was to go to university. 95% (N=456) of students felt that the reason was to have more and better opportunities in the future.

It is notable that the number of students who strongly agree or agree that they focused on speaking skills because they wanted to prepare for the NTS (N =412) or SBA (N=411) was lower than the number of students who indicated other reasons for learning speaking (see above)

The students also responded to Q4-J (**What reason (A-I) is the most important for you?**).

The reasons indicted by the number of participants are shown in Table 5.19 below.

Table 5.19 The most important reason for learning speaking

	%	N=480
A. To get a better job	35	168
B. To be able to go to university	18	84
C. To go abroad for higher studies	13	63
D. To go abroad to work	5	23
E. To prepare for the National Test of Speaking	4	19
F. To prepare for School Based Assessment of Speaking	1	7
G. To acquire the competence to use English in the day to day activities	4	20
H. To fulfil parents' expectations	1	7
I. To have more and better opportunities in the future	19	89

The data clearly show the students' intentions for learning speaking. They mainly wanted to focus on speaking for long-term reasons such as to get a better job, to

have more and better opportunities in the future, to be able to go to university and so on, more than the shorter-term assessment related factors of preparing for the NTS or the SBA.

The students were also asked to mention any other reasons for their learning speaking. Most of their comments that the students mentioned as reasons for Q4-K (If there are any other reasons for your learning speaking, please mention them), reflected their broader expectations in learning speaking.

Self-improvement:

- To have a better life and to get respected in the society (IML/KAL/NS/CH/X/S);
- To achieve higher status in the society (IML/PAT/NS/CP/X/S).

Personal interests:

- Watching English dramas and reading books (IML/KAL/NS/CH/X/S);
- To communicate with foreigners and speak in English fluently (IML/PAT/1AB/ER/Y/S).

Some of the students mentioned assessment as reasons for learning speaking:

- Preparing for the GCE O level exam (IML/BC/1C/AM/Y/S).

Of these reasons, self-improvement was the most popular theme. It was clear that students felt various factors, in addition to testing, were important reasons for their learning speaking.

5.5.5 English as a Life Skill Programme on the National TV

(see section 5.3.4 above for more details of this programme)

(Question 5: *Think about the “English as a Life Skill” programme that has been telecast on the National Rupavahini Television on Saturdays at 7pm. How many episodes have you watched until July 2013? N=480).*

The students’ responses are given in Table 5.20 below.

Table 5.20 ELSP on National Television

	%	N=480
1. All: 100%	1	4
2. Most: 75%	10	49
3. Half: 50%	31	150
4. A few: 25%	39	185
5. None: 0%	19	92

The data show that among the 480 participants in the student questionnaire survey, 42% (N=203) students watched half of the episodes or more than half and 58% (N=277) of students watched less than half of the episodes.

5.5.6 Competency acquired from watching ELSP

(Question 6: *Do you agree that the competence you acquire from watching this “English as a Life Skill” programme will help you to: N=480)*

The students’ opinion on whether the competencies they acquire from watching this programme would be helpful is shown in Table 5.21 below.

Table 5.21 Competencies acquired

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)
A. Get a better job	44	213	43	204	11	54	*	7	*	2
B. Go to university	38	182	44	213	16	77	2	8	0	0
C. Go abroad for higher studies	40	191	37	179	20	97	2	7	1	6
D. Go abroad to work	25	121	52	251	19	89	2	11	2	8
E. Prepare for the National Test of Speaking	33	157	46	223	20	94	1	5	0	1
F. Prepare for School Based Assessment of Speaking	31	147	53	252	14	68	2	10	**	3
G. Use English in the day to day activities	36	175	49	233	14	66	1	5	0	1
H. To fulfil parents' expectations	32	155	45	216	19	89	4	17	**	3
I. Have more and better opportunities in the future	36	174	46	221	16	78	**	2	1	5

* Indicates both options (disagree-1.4% and strongly disagree-0.4%) equal to 2%

** Indicates less than 1%

The students stated that the competencies they acquired from watching this programme on the TV would be helpful in all their activities given in Table 5.21 above. The majority of students either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that the competencies that they would gain from watching this programme TV programme would be helpful for them in their selected activities.

The students were also expected to answer reason share that they felt was most important among the competencies they acquired from watching the programme. Their answers are given in Table 5.22 below.

5.5.6.1 Importance of speaking competency

(Question 6 – J: *Which reason (A to I) is most important for you?* N = 480)

The students' responses are shown in Table 5.22.

Table 5.22 Importance of speaking competency

	%	N=480
A. Get a better job	17	81
B. Go to university	22	105
C. Go abroad for higher studies	15	71
D. Go abroad to work	4	22
E. Prepare for the National Test of Speaking	4	18
F. Prepare for School Based Assessment of Speaking	7	32
G. Use English in the day to day activities	13	64
H. Fulfil parents' expectations	2	10
I. Have more and better opportunities in the future	16	77

The data indicate that the students felt that competency in speaking English was important for going to university and to get a better job and to have better opportunities in the future.

The students were also commented on Q6 – K (**If there are any other reasons for watching this programme, please mention them**). Some of their comments were:

- To improve my speaking skills (IML/PAT/1AB/ER/Y/S);
- To improve my English knowledge (IML/BC/1C/AM/Y/S).

The students' comments suggest that they wanted to improve their speaking skills for broader objectives such as better academic and professional careers in the future.

5.5.7 Focus on learning speaking

(Question 7: How far do you agree with the following statements? N=480)

The students were asked to express their agreement with the statements given in Question 7. Their responses are shown in Table 5.23 below.

Table 5.23 NTS vs. SBA

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)
A. I focus on learning speaking because it is tested at national Level	36	173	45.5	219	15.5	75	2	8	1	5
B. I focus on learning speaking because it is tested at School Level	33	157	59	282	3	16	4	20	1	5

81.5% (N=392) of students suggest that they either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ that they focused on speaking skills because of the government decision to test speaking at national level and 92% (N=439) of students felt that the decision to test speaking at school level made them to focus on speaking skills since the introduction of assessment change in 2011.

The answer to Q7- C (**Which do you think makes you focused more on speaking?**) as shown in Table 5.24 also supports this interpretation of students’ attitude to the NTS and the SBA.

Table 5.24 Influence of test on students

	%	N=480
1. National Test of Speaking	38	183
2. School Based Assessment of speaking	52	247
3. I am undecided	10	50

The majority of students (52%, N=247) felt that the SBA influenced them more to focus on speaking skills than the NTS (38%, N=183).

The students were also expected to answer Question 7 - D (**Please specify your major reason/s for your answer to Q7- C).**

The students those who felt that it was the NTS influenced them more also explained their reasons. Most of the students' comments suggest that they focused on the NTS for obtaining good results, and also suggest the effects of the NTS on them:

- To get good results at national test (IML/PAT/NS/CP/X/S);
- We have to face more competition at national level and it gives more pressure (IML/BC/1AB/OB/Y/S).

The students stated that the SBA made them to focus more on speaking and would help them to score more marks in the NTS:

- It makes me focus more on speaking (IML/KAL/1C/KI/X/S);
- SBA helps me to get good results in the GCE O level (IML/PAT/NS/CP/X/S).

A number of those students who were undecided about whether the NTS or the SBA had influenced their focus on learning speaking explained their reasons. Most of

their comments identify self-improvement and academic and economic success as their reasons for learning speaking.

5.5.8 Speaking test at National level and School level

(Question 8: *How far do you agree with the following statements?* N=480)

The student participants in the questionnaire survey were asked to express their agreement with the decision to conduct speaking test at two levels. Their responses are shown in Table 5.25 below.

Table 5.25 Two levels of testing

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)
A. I like that speaking is tested at national Level	45	214	42	202	12	58	1	4	**	2
B. I like that speaking is tested at School Level	44	211	50	241	3	15	2	9	1	4

** Indicates less than 1%

The analysis of students' agreements to testing speaking at two levels shows that 87% (45%+42% - N = 214 + 202 = 416) of students like the speaking test to be conducted at national level and 94% (44%+50% - N = 211 + 241 = 452) of students wanted the speaking test to be at the school level. Further among the 480 participants, 12% (N = 58) of students felt that they were undecided of testing at the national level.

The students also responded to Question 8-C (**Please specify your major reason/s for your answer to Question 8**). Their responses show that they liked to have speaking at national level for recognition of their achievements and also their comments show the effects of the NTS on their focus of learning:

- I like to show my speaking skills at national level (IML/KAL/NS/CH/Y/S);
- You should be serious in the national test unlike in the SBA (IML/PAT/NS/CP/X/S).

The students' comments suggest that they wanted the speaking test at national level for recognition of their achievement.

However, some students stated why they liked to have speaking at school level:

- School level has less pressure and it is less competitive (IML/BC/1AB/OB/Y/S);
- It is a good practice for the national test (IML/BCO/1AB/CE/X/S);
- I like SBA because the marks that I get will not affect my GCE O level results like the national test (IML/PAT/1AB/ER/X/S).

Some of their comments about the SBA indicate that they wanted the speaking test at school level because they gained experience in speaking skills in the classroom and it provided them a chance for practice for the NTS.

5.5.9 Influence of speaking tests on teachers

(Question 9: *How far do you agree with the following statements about your teacher? My teacher focuses on teaching speaking because;* N= 480)

The students' opinions about the influence of testing speaking at two levels on teaching speaking activities of their teachers are shown in Table 5.26 below.

Table 5.26 Influence of testing on teachers

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)
A. Speaking is tested at National Level	42	203	37	176	18	84	2	10	1	7
B. Speaking is tested at School Level	43	207	47	225	6	28	3	13	1	7

The analysis of data shows that more students felt that it was the SBA which influenced teachers more than the NTS. Further, the number of students who were ‘undecided’ about the influence of the NTS on their teachers was higher than the SBA.

The students were expected to specify any other reasons for their teachers’ focus on teaching speaking, and their comments for Question 9 - C (**Please specify if there are any other reasons for your teacher to focus on teaching speaking**), show their teachers’ concerns about students’ performance:

- Because [the teachers want] all of us [students] should pass the exam (IML/PAT/NS/CP/X/S);
- Our teacher wants us to improve our speaking skills to get a pass in the GCE O level (IML/KAL/1C/SA/Y/S).

The students’ comments show that they felt that their teachers wanted them to improve their speaking in English for assessment related purposes.

5.5.10 Usefulness of the NTS and the SBA

(Question 10: *How far do you agree with the following statements?* N=480)

The students were expected to express their opinions on how helpful the tests were in improving their speaking ability. Their opinions are shown in Table 5.27 below.

Table 5.27 Role of tests in improving speaking ability

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)
A. The National Test of Speaking will help me to improve my speaking ability	54	257	36	175	9	44	*	2	*	2
B. School Based Assessment of Speaking will help me to improve my speaking ability	44	211	50	241	5	26	*	1	*	1
C. The skills I learn in the speaking lessons in the classroom within the ELSP are useful to communicate in English with others outside the classroom	43	205	46	222	9	42	1	7	1	4

*Indicates less than 1%

The data suggest that the students felt that the decision to test speaking would help them to improve their speaking ability. 90% (N=432) of students ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ that the NTS would help them to improve their speaking ability. 94% (N = 452) of students who felt it was the SBA which was slightly higher than the number of students who felt it was the NTS. 89% (N=427) of students also ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ that the skills they gained in the speaking classes would help them to

communicate in English outside the classroom. 9% of students (N = 44) who were 'undecided' about the NTS was more than the percentage of students (5%, N = 26) who were 'undecided' about the SBA.

In response to Q10: D (**Please specify your major reason/s for your answer to Q10**). Some of the students' comments show their agreement with the objectives of the ELSP, and also show the effect of the NTS on their focus on speaking and their preference for the SBA:

- ELSP is a very useful programme for us [school children] and it helps us to communicate in English with others outside the classroom (IML/PAT/NS/CC/X/S);
- When it is tested at national level, the students will practice more and gain more knowledge and get better opportunities in their life (IML/BCO/NS/VI/X/S);
- School Based Assessments is conducted in a familiar environment and of course it is very useful (IML/PAT/1C/TH/X/S).

Some of the students' comments suggest that they had different reasons for agreeing with the statements in Question 10 (as shown in Table 5.27 above).

Finally, the student questionnaire aimed to elicit written responses about any other changes in attitude or behaviour in their own learning of speaking skills and in their teachers' classroom activities in the speaking lessons, that they felt had been caused by the NTS or the SBA since the assessment change within the ELSP, but that they felt had not been covered in the questionnaire. The comments show that speaking would not be focused on unless it was tested, and also show the students' concerns of good performance in the NTS:

- Speaking is focused now because of the national test. [If there is] no test, then there will be no speaking activities in the classroom (IML/KAL/1C/KI/X/S);

- The decision to test speaking created the situation where the teachers and the students must focus on speaking (IML/PAT/1AB/KV/X/S).

The above comments made by some of the students indicated that they believed the decision to assess speaking had encouraged the teachers to focus on speaking activities in the classroom.

However, some of the comments made by the participants indicated that they were concerned about their performance at the NTS since it would negatively reflect on their final grades in English:

- It is not necessary to have the national test of speaking (IML/BCO/1C/AN/X/S);
- National Test of Speaking will affect our results (IML/BC/1AB/OC/Y/S).

Some of the students were of the opinion that the NTS would affect their performance in the GCE O level which had previously assessed only reading and writing skills.

Some of the participants' comments about the assessment change within the ELSP below show that in general they were supportive of the government initiatives to make the teachers and students focus on speaking, although some of them did not like the NTS to be included in the GCE O level. Some of the student participants' comments were:

- This project is very useful and essential for the students. I improve my talents in speaking through this project (IML/BC/NS/MB/X/S);
- It is a good move. We have more and better opportunities for speaking now (IML/PAT/1C/KA/X/S).

The above comments suggest that students were supportive of the government initiatives to encourage a focus on speaking.

5.6 Summary of student questionnaire findings in relation to RQ 2

This section will first discuss the student questionnaire findings, and will then compare the findings with data obtained from the interviews with participants at the intervening level and data obtained from the teacher questionnaire searching for answers to RQ 2.

As far as language use in the speaking classes is concerned, the student questionnaire data suggest that the majority of students reported their teachers used more English in the speaking lessons than the reading and writing classes. The teachers' attitude towards language use, as reported by students, might be because of the effects of the assessment change. This is in alignment with the policy intentions related to the ELSP that students should be afforded more opportunities to speak in English in the classroom. The student questionnaire findings about the 'language use' were also compared with classroom observation findings and further discussed in Chapter 6 – section 6.1.2.

The students' comments suggest that teachers used a range of activities to teach speaking in the classroom. It was 'exchanging information' that they reported their teachers used more than other activities in the speaking classes. It had been announced that 'exchanging information' and 'picture description' would be the two activities to be tested in the NTS. Therefore, it was expected that these two activities would be focused on more in the speaking classes. As expected, the majority of students reported that 'exchanging information' was used more by their teachers, but not 'picture description'. The activities used in the speaking classes were compared

with the classroom observation findings and are further discussed in Chapter 6 – section 6.1.1.

The student questionnaire data suggest that teachers started to focus on the speaking activities in the prescribed books. Since, there was criticism by the policy makers that teachers focused more on reading and writing activities in the English Pupil's Books and in the English Pupil's Workbook for the reasons that only reading and writing skills were tested in the GCE O level. One of the policy intentions, therefore, that the decision to test speaking would make the teachers and students to focus more on the speaking activities in these books which were neglected before the assessment change (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5).

The students' comments indicate that teachers used the *English Pupil's Books*, *English Pupil's Workbook* and *Past exam question papers* most often in their teaching speaking activities. The use of more speaking activities in the given books such as *English Pupil's Books* and *English Pupil's Workbook* by the Ministry of Education was in line with the policy intentions.

The findings of the interview with the participants at the intervening level were similar to the findings of student questionnaire that teachers started to focus more on the speaking activities in the *English Pupil's Book* and *English Pupil's Workbook* (see Chapter 4 - section 4.4.2).

The data show that the majority of students' opinion was that the teachers used a lot of past exam question papers in their speaking lessons.

The teachers might have wanted the students to be prepared and to be familiar with the speaking activities that were to be tested in the NTS expecting the students to

perform well in the NTS. The use of past exam papers might be because of the direct effects of the assessment change on the teaching activities and the teachers wanting to give more attention to the demands of the assessments (Morris 1972, Pearson 1988, Alderson and Wall 1993, Green 2007a).

The findings were similar to previous washback studies that teachers would use more assessment related materials in their teaching (see Chapter 2 – section 2.4.1.3).

The findings of student questionnaire data also show that students looked beyond the assessment related factors as reasons for acquiring competencies in speaking skills. The results presented in section 5.5.4 above showed that the main reasons for learning speaking skills as indicated by the student participants were neither the NTS nor the SBA but higher studies and better employment opportunities in their future careers. It suggests that students felt either the NTS or the SBA were not as influential as factors such as higher studies, employment, and travelling to foreign countries on their focus of speaking skills within the ELSP.

This indicates that students had long term objectives of learning speaking than the immediate objectives of preparing for assessments when learning speaking skills within the ELSP.

The students' objectives of learning speaking skills were similar to that of the intentions of the policy makers that the assessment change would make students focus more on speaking and hence to produce students who would be able to speak in English for finding better opportunities in their future academic and professional careers once they had completed their school career.

The students comments also suggest that they were concerned about their performance at national level and their concerns about their poor performance at the national test that would affect their future academic and professional career, but on the other hand they liked to have the speaking test at school level since it gave them experience to perform well at the final test and they felt it caused less pressure on them and it was less competitive since it might be conducted in their familiar environment (see section 5.5.8 above).

The students opinion on the influence of the NTS and the SBA on their teachers was similar to what they felt about the influence of the NTS and the SBA on their own learning activities, and the reasons for more students were undecided about the influence of the NTS than the SBA might be because of the uncertainty of the NTS as discussed above (see section 5.5.9 above).

The discussions of student questionnaire data show that the students did not have any concerns about the government intentions to make speaking as much of a focus as other skills such as reading, writing and grammar in the English teaching and learning activities. They were very supportive of focusing speaking skills in the classroom. However, some of them were not as supportive of the government decision to try to make the teachers and students to focus on speaking by means of testing especially by means of the NTS (see section 5.5.10 above).

The discussions also suggest that there is a mismatch between the policy makers' presumptions about reasons for the focus on speaking skills and the teachers' and students' actual attitudes to teaching and learning speaking. The policy makers' intention for the new assessment change was that the students should be able to speak

in English when they left school. They presumed that testing would make the teachers and students focus on speaking since they believed that reading and writing skills were focused on in the classroom since they had been tested or in other words, the policy makers' presumptions were that speaking was neglected in the classroom for the reason that it was not tested (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5).

The policy makers' presumptions about focus of speaking were supported by the comments of intervening level participants (see Chapter 4 – section 4.4 for interview findings) and also by the teachers' comments in section 5.3.2 above. The interview participants and the teachers clearly stated that students started to focus more on speaking since the decision to test speaking within the ELSP.

However, the students' comments suggest that they were interested in learning speaking for many reasons (see section 5.5.4 and 5.5.6 above). The students' reasons for learning speaking suggest that they might focus on speaking activities whether there was a speaking assessment or not.

This raises a question. As students had positive attitudes towards learning speaking, what might be possible reasons why speaking was not being focused on in the classes before the assessment change was introduced in 2011, even though it was a part of the English curriculum? It might be that teacher related factors, such as their perceptions and attitudes towards the tests (see Chapter 2 – section 2.4.1.1), were more influential than other factors such as student related factors (students' current English level), classroom related factors (class size, available teaching and learning resources in the classroom), and exam related factors (the NTS, the SBA) as discussed in section 5.3.9 above, because as previous washback studies indicated

that teachers are the “implementers of any reform” (Wall 2005, p.280). The students’ comments also clearly show that they thought their teachers would focus on teaching speaking in the class only when there was to be an assessment (see section 5.5.10 above). The students’ comments suggest that their willingness to learn speaking was not in line with the presumptions of the policy makers and teachers.

Chapter 6 Results and Discussion – Classroom observations and Follow-up interviews

This Chapter reports the findings of classroom observations and follow-up interviews of the 12 teachers who were observed for three speaking lessons each (see Chapter 3 – section 3.8.4.1 for teacher participants for classroom observations), to establish whether the new system of assessment of speaking within the ELSP contributed to any changes in classroom teaching and whether any observed changes are consistent with policy intentions. The findings of classroom observations with participants at the implementing level will be discussed in relation to Research Question 3: *What are the observable washback effects of the National Test of Speaking and School Based Assessment of Speaking on teachers' instructional practices?*

In each section of this chapter, following discussion of observational findings, I compare the evidence on the relevant features with the interview data for Master Trainers, In-Service Advisors, and Assistant Directors of Education (English), and with questionnaire findings to establish how far these sources of evidence are consistent, how far the observed classes seemed to reflect the policy intentions and to establish whether the washback effects of the assessment change reported by teachers are also observable in their classroom activities.

6.1 Findings from classroom observations and follow up interviews

Observation data was recorded using an adaptation of the COLT observation scheme (Green 2007a, Spada and Fröhlich 1995) (see Chapter 3 – section 3.8.3, and Appendix 8 for classroom observation scheme used in the main study) and field

notes made by the observers. The number of minutes spent was recorded against each category on the observation scheme (such as participant organisation, content, and student modality) during students' engagement in activities. The language used for classroom interaction and the materials used in the speaking classes were also recorded. These figures were added together to give the total number of minutes for a particular activity or behaviour. From these totals, it was possible to calculate the percentage of class time for each feature under the different categories within each lesson and across all lessons in the study (see Chapter 3 – section 3.8.8).

Consistency between the two observers in recording data was achieved through discussion. Whenever there was any difference in selection of categories of lessons observed, the two observers checked the lesson plans, and the teachers were also asked to guide the observers in coming to an agreement about the categories. For instance, when students were doing group work activities in a speaking lesson, the students were doing oral discussions and writing. There were instances where one observer checked mark 'speaking' under the category of 'student modality' as the exclusive focus, but the other observer check marked both 'speaking' and 'writing' as a combined focus. In such instances, the teachers who had been given the lesson in question were asked for their comments on which of the possible categories had been the focus because the teachers always monitored the classroom activities while students were engaged in learning. The teachers' comments helped the observers to agree on which categories to assign.

The chapter follows the organisation of the adapted COLT scheme and considers each feature in turn starting with *Student engagement*.

6.1.1 Student engagement

Table 6.1 below shows the class time spent on student engagement in activities in the speaking lessons. It illustrates the number of times a particular school was visited and the time spent on student engagement in the speaking lessons.

Table 6.1 Student engagement

Zone	Type of school	Date of visits	Types of activities	Class time spent on student engagement			
				<i>Passive/Teacher-fronted activities</i>		<i>Active</i>	
				Time (Minutes)	Time (Percentage)	Time (Minutes)	Time (Percentage)
Batticaloa	National (BCO/NS/CC)	06.09.2013	Exchanging information	5	13	33	87
		13.09.2013	Exchanging information	7	18	32	82
		26.09.2013	Role play dialogue	12	32	26	68
	IAB (BCO/IAB/HI)	01.10.2013	Role play dialogue	9	24	28	76
		03.10.2013	Discussion	11	29	27	71
		04.10.2013	Picture description	10	26	29	74
	IC (BCO/IC/AN)	17.10.2013	Listen to a dialogue and report it to the class	10	26	28	74
		24.10.2013	Picture description	9	24	28	76
		31.10.2013	Build up vocabulary/ make meaningful sentences/ Present them to the class	10	27	27	73

Batticaloa Central	National (BC/NS/MB)	05.09.2013	Spontaneous speeches on different topics	9	24	29	76
		19.09.2013	Exchanging information	8	21	31	79
		03.10.2013	Picture description	5	14	31	86
	1AB (BC/1AB/OB)	31.10.2013	Making request and placing order	7	19	30	81
		07.11.2013	Picture description	10	27	27	73
		14.11.2013	Listen and report	7	19	30	81
	1C (BC/1C/AM)	08.09.2013	Exchanging information	10	26	29	74
		15.09.2013	Picture description	9	23	30	77
		22.09.2013	Picture description	10	26	28	74
Pattiruppu	National (PAT/NS/PA)	04.11.2013	Exchanging information	6	16	32	84
		11.11.2013	Spontaneous speeches	5	13	33	87
		18.11.2013	Picture description	7	18	31	82
	1AB (PAT/1AB/KV)	08.10.2013	Discussion	11	29	27	71
		15.10.2013	Role play dialogue	6	16	31	84
		29.10.2013	Exchanging information	7	19	30	81
	1C (PAT/1C/TH)	04.10.2013	Exchanging information	9	25	27	75
		11.10.2013	Picture description	11	34	26	66
		13.10.2013	Speech on selected topic	13	34	25	66
Kalkudah	National (KAL/NS/VM)	02.09.2013	Meeting and greeting people	7	19	30	81
		16.09.2013	Exchanging information	7	18	31	82
		23.09.2013	Making suggestions	8	22	29	78

			and responding				
	1AB (KAL/1AB/M A)	03.09.2013	Picture description	9	24	28	76
		10.09.2013	Listen and report	8	22	29	78
		17.09.2013	Exchanging information	8	22	29	78
	1C (KAL/1C/KI)	01.11.2013	Responding to different situations	10	28	26	72
		08.11.2013	Making requests and placing orders	10	26	28	74
		15.11.2013	Exchanging information	8	21	30	79

Active and passive activities differ in terms of ‘student engagement’ in the speaking activities. When activities are initiated by teachers, they are considered ‘passive activities’ and when initiated by one or group of students, they are considered as ‘active’ (see Chapter 3 – section 3.8.3 above).

The start and end time of student engagement in each activity in the speaking lessons was recorded so that the percentage of class time spent on *active* and *passive* student engagement on other categories on the adapted observation scheme captured could be calculated. All the activities within a single lesson include: passive student engagement – when activities are initiated by teachers, active student engagement – when students initiate activities (see Chapter 3 – section 3.8.3 for explanation of student engagement).

A general pattern across schools was observed, namely that a higher percentage of class time involved activities where students were actively (rather than passively) engaged. In total, out of the 1,353 minutes of classroom observation, 1,045 minutes

were spent on active student engagement in the speaking classes and 308 minutes spent on passive student engagement (see Table 6.1 above for proportion of active/passive engagement of students in speaking lessons for each individual class).

However, there was sometimes considerable variation between classes conducted by the same teacher. In one teacher's classes (BCO/NS/CC/X), passive student engagement (referring to teacher-fronted activities where students listen to the teacher's instructions – see also section 6.1.1 above) in speaking activities in lessons varied from 13% (5 minutes of a 38 minute lesson – visit 1) to 32% (12 minutes of a 38 minute lesson – visit 3).

The review of lesson plans showed that the speaking lesson in which students were engaged in passive activities for 32% of class time involved a role play dialogue between two students.

In this lesson, the teacher (BCO/NS/CC/X) explained the procedures and displayed a sample dialogue on the blackboard (a salesman and a customer in a garment shop) for the students in groups for practice and then different 'situation cards' (in a market, in a food city, in a book shop) were given to the students to develop their own dialogues in groups to present in the class. A possible explanation might be that the teacher (BCO/NS/CC/X) could have thought that the role play dialogue was a complex activity and it needed more explanation and instructions for the students to understand the task type (see Appendix 9, 10, 11 and 12 for the detailed lesson plan, sample dialogue, observers' note and observation data for visit 3).

Another activity in which students were passive (listening to teacher's instructions about how to perform the speaking activity) for only 13% of classroom time for the

same teacher (visit 1), involved collecting information from a person (friend) based on an information card and conveying the information content orally to the class (see Appendix 13, 14 and 15 for detailed lesson plan, observers' note and observers' note for visit 1).

These two examples above show that even though the lessons were conducted by the same teacher for the same students, the time spent on student engagement in the speaking classes varied with the different types of lessons selected for in the speaking classes.

The analysis of observation data, and observers' note supported the observation that student engagement in the speaking classes depended on the way that the lessons were planned and conducted in the classrooms.

It took the teacher longer (5 minutes) to explain the procedures of the lesson observed in visit 3 and less time (2 minutes) for the same teacher to explain the procedures of the lesson observed in visit 1.

The analysis of a very similar lesson plan to the first example above by another teacher (BCO/1AB/HI/X) involved the same type of activity "Let us role play a dialogue" (a dialogue between a customer and a shop keeper bargaining for items). Here students were passive for 24% of lesson time. Although less than in the class given by teacher BCO/NS/CC/X, this suggests that the task type requires relatively extensive explanation and instructions.

Although limited, these examples suggest that students' engagement in speaking activities varied among lessons observed. The reasons identified for these

observations were the way lessons were planned and conducted in classrooms and individual teacher differences.

The observation data (see Table 6.1 above) show that even though student engagement in the speaking activities was not always consistent among different type of schools, time spent on activities in which students were actively involved was always higher than that spent on activities in which students were passive.

Table 6.2, below summarises the student engagement in speaking lessons in different types of school. The table illustrates the average percentage of time spent on passive and active engagement of students in the speaking lessons observed.

Table 6.2 Summary of average percentage of time spent on student engagement

Total % of time spent by schools	Types of schools	Student engagement (percentage of class time)	
		Passive student engagement	Active student engagement
	National school	19	81
	1AB	23	77
	1C	26	74

The average percentage of comparative analysis of student engagement showed that the students in National schools engaged more (81%) in speaking activities than students in 1AB (77%) and 1C (74%) schools.

This indicates that active engagement in classroom activities was higher than passive engagement (see Table 6.2 above) and these effects were in line with policy makers' intentions that more classroom time should be allocated for the students to

actively engage in speaking activities. However, the analysis of data indicates that students in the National schools were actively involved during speaking lessons more than students in the 1AB and 1C schools.

It should be noted that students' ability in the National schools is considered higher than 1AB and 1C schools and the data may suggest that the higher the ability of the students, the more engagement in speaking activities there is likely to be.

It is also important to note that in all speaking classes observed, active engagement of students did not produce only 'speaking'. Students were also involved in reading, writing, listening or combination of these skills when they were actively engaged in the speaking lessons.

6.1.1.1 Types of activities

Even though, teachers were supposed to follow the full range of the syllabus and scheme set out by the Ministry of Education, the observation data show that among the various types of speaking activities observed in the classroom (see Table 6.1 above) "exchanging (personal) information" and "picture description" were popular among teachers and were discussed 19 times out of the 36 lessons observed. It should be noted that these two activities were planned to be tested in the year 2015 (the NTS was planned to be held in the same year when the classroom observations were done in 2013 but later postponed to year 2015) (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5).

The analysis of types of activities in the speaking classes observed indicates that these two activities (picture description- 9 times and exchange (personal) information- 10 times) were practised 19 times (53%) out of 36 lessons observed.

These two activities were observed one or more than one time in the speaking classes conducted by all the 12 teachers.

Picture descriptions focused on tasks such as narrating a picture story, describing an event/ activity in a picture, describing a chart, and report writing through picture description.

Exchanging information/ asking and giving information included tasks such as getting know each other- self description of a person, description of others, detective and witness, listening to what teacher says and reporting it to class (reported speech), giving directions.

The different tasks under picture description and exchanging information indicate that the teachers wanted the students to be familiar with any possible type of activities which could appear for the tests since these two activities would be tested at the NTS.

6.1.2 Language

The language used in the classroom interactions was also recorded during the classroom observations. Table 6.3 below, shows the percentage of L1 (Tamil) and L2 (English) used during student engagement in speaking activities.

Table 6.3a Language used in teacher-fronted activities

	Types of schools	Language used for student engagement (Total % of time spent on language)		
Types of schools		L1	L2	L1&L2
	National	3.5	93	3.5
	1AB	26	54	20
	1C	51	16	33

Table 6.3b Language used in active student engagement

	Types of schools	Language used for student engagement (Total % of time spent on language)		
Types of schools		L1	L2	L1&L2
	National	7	69	24
	1AB	29	39	32
	1C	62	14	24

The comparative analysis of data show that students in the National schools were exposed to English more (69%) than students in the 1AB (39%) and 1C schools (14%) when they actively engaged in speaking activities.

The same trend was observed when they were involved in passive activities (teacher-fronted activities) where students in the National schools were exposed to English for 93% of the time: that is the teachers used more English in the class when interacting with the students than in 1AB (54%) and 1C (16%) schools respectively.

The field notes taken during the classroom observations show that teachers and students in the National schools used English in most of their classroom activities

such as teacher interaction with students, student interaction with the teacher, student interaction with other students during their group work activities and when students presented their work to the class.

In other types of schools, the students used more Tamil when doing group work activities and English when presenting their work to the class. The reasons for the difference in the use of English in the classroom activities would be the National schools are considered to be well-established and with higher-ability students while the 1AB and 1C schools are suffering from poor facilities with lower-ability students (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.2.1).

This is in contrast to the intention of the assessment change that students should use English in their speaking classes.

6.1.3 Participant organisation

Table 6.4, below summarises the observations relating to ‘participant organisation.’ It shows the percentage of class time spent on the following categories: Whole Class Work, Group Work, and Individual Work. Whole Class Work is further divided into four sub- divisions, and Group Work and Individual Work into two further sub-divisions (Appendix 6 for the observation scheme used in the main study).

Table 6.4 Participant organisation

	Types of schools	participant organisation (Total % of time spent on different features)							
		Class				Group		Individual	
		T↔S/C	S/C↔T	S↔S/C	Choral	Same task	Different task	Same task	Different task
Total % of time spent by schools	National school	19	14	24	0	23	16	3	1
	1AB	23	13	17	0	23	24	0	*
	1C	26	15	15	0	30	10	3	1

* Indicates less than 1%

The observation data show that teachers allowed more time for active student engagement in the speaking classes than teacher-fronted activities (T↔S/C) such as explaining grammar points, giving detailed explanation of how to perform the speaking tasks and giving model answers before the activity would be presented.

In National schools the proportion of teacher-fronted activities only accounts for 19% of the class time and accounts for 23% and 26% in 1 AB and 1C schools respectively. Since, the teacher-fronted activities took lesser percentage of time it allowed students to engage more in speaking activities in their groups and to interact with the whole class.

However, the observation that the proportion of teacher engagement was higher in 1C schools might be due to the fact that the IC students' ability in English was weaker than students in other types of schools.

The data also show that considerable amount of class time was used in group work activities. National schools spent 39% of their time on group work activities and 1AB and 1C schools spent 47% and 40% respectively. Choral work was not often observed in speaking lessons.

The observation data on participant organisation also tend to support the policy intentions that teachers were expected to create more speaking opportunities for students in the classroom.

6.1.4 Content

This category describes the subject matter of the activities in the speaking classroom that is, what is talked, written, read about, or listened to – in other words, the category 'content' on the observation scheme includes features such as classroom management, focus of instruction, and topic (see Chapter 3 – section 3.8.3).

For these categories, the policy intention was that teachers should shift the focus away from the traditional second language teaching approach in Sri Lanka, which focused more on grammar (form), towards a more meaning-oriented form of instruction.

The percentage of total class time for 'content' categories and sub-categories are presented in Table 6.5 below.

Table 6.5 Content categories

	Type of schools	Content									
		Total % of time spent on different content categories									
		Management		Focus of instruction				Topic			
		Procedure	Discipline	Form	Function	Meaning	Combination	NTS	SBA	Both (NTS/SBA)	Other
Total % of time spent by schools	National school	9	*	14	4	66	6	0	*	*	0
	1AB	11	0	23	5	52	9	0	0	0	0
	1C	19	0	33	7	34	6	0	0	*	0

* These features took only 1% of total class time observed

The data show that percentage of class time focusing on ‘meaning’ was higher than other features of content category. In comparing different types of schools, it became apparent that National schools focused more on ‘meaning’ (66%). By contrast, the focus on ‘meaning’ was lower in 1AB and 1C schools (52%, 34% respectively).

However, the data also indicate that time spent on ‘meaning’ was higher than other content categories in National and 1AB schools but in 1C schools the time spent on ‘meaning’ was 34% and that was closer to time spent on ‘form’ (33%).

This can be attributed to the language ability of the students (which decreases from National schools to 1C schools) (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.2 for details about types of school). When the students’ English is poor, teachers may tend to focus

more on ‘form’. The same factor could have influenced time spent on ‘procedure’ where teachers spent less time in National schools, but more in 1C schools.

When the combination of focus is considered, the observation data show the higher percentage of class time spent on focusing on combination of form and meaning (in National and 1C schools) and on combination of function and meaning (in 1AB schools).

This might be an indication of how individual teacher differences influence teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

6.1.5 Student modality

Table 6.6 below summarises observation data relating to ‘student modality.’ It shows the percentage of time spent by students with exclusive or primary focus on the four language skills (or on a combination of skills) during their speaking lessons.

Table 6.6 Student modality

	Types of schools	Student modality					
		Total % of time spent on different language skills					
		Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Other	Combinations
Total % of time spent by schools	National	20	49	2	12	0	17
	1AB	12	44	10	17	2	15
	1C	10	35	19	28	0	8

The analysis of classroom observation data from all the speaking lessons observed showed that the primary focus of students was on speaking rather than other skills

such as reading, writing, listening, or on a combination of skills. This might be due to the effect of the new system of assessment.

However, the percentage of time spent on speaking skills varied among different types of schools – National, 1AB, and 1C schools (49%, 44%, 35% respectively).

This suggests that even though, the teachers wanted the students to be involved in more speaking activities in speaking classes, the ability of students in different types of schools might have prevented their effort to focus more on speaking.

The other reason might be the type of activities selected for in the speaking classes: For example, one teacher (KAL/NS/VM/X) (visit 1) spent 73% of class time in one lesson focusing on speaking. In this case, the speaking activity was ‘meeting and greeting people.’ However, the same teacher with the same students spent only 49% of class time in another lesson on speaking (visit 3). On this occasion, the focus of the lesson was on the language functions of ‘making suggestions and responding’.

This suggests the amount of speaking that occurs in the classroom was also related to the choice of activity and how it was conducted in the classroom.

However, it is noteworthy that the same type of speaking activity was handled by two different teachers. Two teachers (BCO/1AB/HI/X, and PAT/NS/PA/X) conducted a lesson on ‘picture description’ and they exclusively focused on speaking 62% and 34% of the time respectively.

This shows that how differently individual teachers handled the same type of activity (this is also indicated under the section 6.1.1 above). Therefore, time spent

on speaking activities greatly depends on how individual teachers handle speaking activities in the classroom as well as the type of activities selected for speaking.

6.2 Follow-up interviews

Following each class, I interviewed the teacher involved for the purpose of understanding the aims and objectives of the lesson and also to establish their understanding of whether the National Test of Speaking (NTS) or the School Based Assessment (SBA) had any influence on the content of lessons and methods of teaching. These interviews also served the purpose of complementing the recorded observation data with the teachers involved.

6.2.1 Objectives of speaking lessons

The follow up interviews with teachers after the classroom observations suggest that teachers plan their lessons for speaking activities in such a way as to give more class time to student engagement in speaking activities. All twelve teacher participants said that they wanted to spend more time on activities in which students would actively engage in the allocated class time for speaking, having both the NTS and SBA in mind. One of the teacher participants (IML/KAL/1C/KI/X) explained:

I plan my speaking lessons to give more oral practice for students in the classroom and I always have pair work and group work activities in my speaking lessons. So, the students can have more time to get involved in speaking activities. I spend only a few minutes of the forty-minute lesson for activities such as explaining tasks and answering students' questions and I give more time for students because they need practice for the for speaking tests and classroom is the only place that they get at least a few minutes for speaking practice (IML/KAL/1C/KI/X).

The different types of activities that teachers used in the speaking classes (see Table 6.1 above) was also an indication of what teachers said about involving students

more in speaking activities as a practice for the speaking tests. Among the different types of activities used in the speaking classes, picture description and exchange of (personal) information would be tested at the NTS planned to be held in 2015.

The teachers' comments about language used in the speaking classes show that students at certain types of school were weak in English. This might be the reason for more use of 'Tamil' in the speaking classes. One teacher's (IML/PAT/1C/TT/X) comments confirm this:

I have no options than using more Tamil in the classroom. My students are shy to speak in English and at the same time their English knowledge is poor. I put all my effort to make them [students] speak or they will lose marks at the speaking tests. You should understand that they need more time to get over this situation (IML/PAT/1C/TT/X).

The comments suggest that use of language in the speaking classes depended to an extent on the language ability of students.

6.2.2 Content and method of teaching

The analysis of follow up interview with teachers suggest that the content and method of teaching depended on factors including speaking ability of students, available classroom facilities such as space for group activities and proximity of the adjacent class, syllabus to be covered in a particular school term, and the speaking tests.

In this study, *content of teaching* includes categories included on the observation scheme such as management, focus of instruction and topic and *method of teaching*, including seating arrangements of students in the speaking classes, interaction

between the teacher and students (see Chapter 3 – section 3.8.3), and language used in the classroom activities, and materials used for teaching speaking by the teachers.

Most teachers commented on what the content and method of teaching speaking depended on. One teacher participant (IML/BC/1C/AM/X) explained:

I want to make all the students in the class to speak in English, so the only way is to put them in groups (IML/BC/1C/AM/X).

One teacher (IML/KAL/1C/ KI/X) also commented on what the content and method of teaching depended on after a speaking lesson (the lesson was: Responding to different situations – visit 1) was being observed:

It depends on many factors and my main concern is the students. The students are very weak in English but they like to speak in English. I am working in a remote school and the classroom facilities are not same like town schools. The classrooms are noisy and crowded. It is hard to arrange group work activities. I should also cover allocated lessons in the syllabus before this term is over (IML/KAL/1C/ KI/X).

When the same teacher was asked about the content and method of teaching after a lesson which was about “Self-description” (Exchanging information- Visit 3) (I live in/ I like/ I enjoy/ My favourite), the teacher said, “I selected this mainly because the students will have an activity like this for the final test.”

The comments suggest that the content and method of teaching speaking in the classroom depended on teacher, student, classroom and assessment (especially the NTS) related factors.

Among these factors, assessment related factors especially high stakes tests influenced the teachers more in their selection of content and method of teaching speaking.

This was found to be the case when the teacher (IML/KAL/1C/ KI/X) commented on factors which the content and method of teaching depended on after the lesson (Visit 3). The teacher knew that the particular type of activity would appear on the final test and in this case, she did not mention about other factors as the teacher did at the first visit, but only about the final test.

The interview data obtained from teachers also suggested that one of the factors that determined their lesson planning was ability of students. When asked about ‘What is your lesson plan based on?’ most of the teachers including all four teachers observed in the 1C schools said that one of the factors was ability of the students.

A teacher PAT/1C/TH/X explained:

In my class, most of the students are very weak in English. First, I teach them related vocabulary, spelling and how to pronounce a word and also sentence structures before each lesson. Then only, I can expect students to get involved in speaking activities (PAT/1C/TH/X).

The same teacher who was recently transferred from a National school to the present 1C school also indicated:

I did not spend much time on explaining grammar because the students were good in English where I worked before. I was able to start the speaking lessons directly without much focus on grammar (PAT/1C/TH/X).

The teachers’ comments and observation data suggest that student factors and teacher differences influenced the focus on different content categories in the speaking classes.

The teachers focused more on the categories such as ‘procedure’ and ‘form’ when they felt that students would not be able to understand the speaking tasks and students’ language ability would not be enough for completing the selected speaking tasks, but they focused more on ‘meaning’ when they felt that students

would be able to do the speaking tasks given to them without much assistance from the teacher (see section 6.1.4 above).

6.3 Overall discussions of findings

This section combines the findings of semi-structured interviews with participants at the intervening level, teacher and student questionnaire with classroom observations to find out whether there were any gaps between policy makers' intentions and the intervening level participants' understanding of the assessment change (Research Question One), what teachers reported as their perceptions and attitudes to the assessment change (Research Question Two) and these really reflect in their teaching practices in the speaking classes (Research Question Three).

The interview findings show that changes had occurred in the speaking classes (when compared to other classes where reading and writing were taught and compared to before the change) after the assessment change in certain aspects of teaching and learning selected for in this study. The interview findings also show that there were no important gaps between the policy makers' intentions and intervening level participants' understanding of the assessment change. The findings also show that teachers' attitude and classroom practices towards teaching, learning and assessment of speaking had changed when compared to teaching practices before the 2011 change. For example, the participants suggested that teachers allocated more time for speaking, and students' involvement in the speaking activities in the form of group work increased than other classes where reading and writing were taught (see Chapter 4 – section 4.4).

The teacher questionnaire findings show that the teachers had positive attitude toward the assessment change. All approved of the intention that emphasis should be given to learning speaking. There were changes, as reported by teachers, in teachers' attitude towards teaching speaking. For example, teachers allocated more time for speaking, and selected more activities from the prescribed books compared to before the change.

The teachers' perceptions of the washback effect of assessment change on their students were that the students focused more on speaking after the decision to test speaking. The changes were in line with the policy intentions. However, the changes, as reported by teachers, were limited due to various factors. For example, factors related to assessment such as continual postponement of the NTS and the uncertainty about the weighting SBA (see Chapter 5 – section 5.3.13).

The student questionnaire findings show that they were supportive of the change, and their reasons for learning speaking were beyond the assessment purposes. They were also of the opinion that decision to test speaking made their teachers to focus more on speaking or there would not be any speaking activities in the classroom (see Chapter 5 – section 5.5.10).

The classroom observation findings show that teachers' attitude and classroom practices towards aspects of teaching and learning in the speaking classroom were in line with the policy makers' intentions. For example, the findings of the analysis of time spent on student engagement in the speaking classes indicate that activities where students were actively engaged dominated the classroom activities. This

finding supports the intention of policy makers that teachers should promote active engagement of students in the speaking classes (see section 6.1.1 above).

The classroom findings with regard to teacher's practices towards teaching speaking, taken together with the findings of interviews, teacher and student questionnaires, and classroom observation show that assessment change had a generally positive effect on teachers and students as intended in the new policy. There was a clear change in the aspects of student engagement in speaking activities. The teachers allocated more time to group work activities in their speaking classes and student centred activities predominated. This finding is in line with the intention of policy makers that teachers should promote active engagement of students in the speaking classes.

However, the findings of the interview and teacher and student questionnaire suggested that both the NTS and the SBA had an equal effect on teachers and students, and that most of the participants in the interview and questionnaire survey were concerned about the continual postponement of the NTS and uncertainty about the importance of SBA marks to final grading.

These comments should be balanced against the findings from the classroom observations, namely that most of the speaking activities (19 of the 36 lessons observed) selected by the teachers in the speaking lessons were similar to the activities to be tested on the NTS (see section 6.1.1 above). This was one of the gaps observed between what teachers said and what they actually did. For example, from teachers' responses for one of the teacher questionnaire items (How much do the following factors influence your choice of what you teach?), the main factors

identified were students' expectations (N=32) and, students' current English level (N=29), while a lower number of teachers (N=25) said that it was the NTS which influenced their content of speaking lessons (see Chapter 5 – section 5.3.9 above).

This might be an indication of the likely influence of the NTS on their teaching speaking activities and the influence of NTS on teachers confirms the findings of previous washback studies that high-stakes tests influence teachers and learners more and that they may adjust their behaviour more when test results matter most to them (see Chapter 2 – section 2.3.2.4). This might also be an indication of the seasonality of washback: teachers tend to focus more on items to be tested when the test is nearer (see Chapter 2 – section 2.3.2.6).

It needs to be remembered that the classroom observations were carried out in November 2013, later than the questionnaire survey, when the NTS was supposed to be administered in December 2013 for the first time after the postponement of the original decision to be held in December 2012.

The findings of the teacher questionnaire, student questionnaire and classroom observations also raised concerns:

The policy makers presumed that the teachers and students could be made to focus more on speaking through the assessment change. Teachers were also of the view that students' lacked interest in speaking skills because it had not been tested (unlike reading and writing).

However, evidence suggests that there were gaps and opposing viewpoints between the policy makers' reasons for the introduction of speaking assessments and teachers' perceptions of their students' level of focus on speaking.

The student questionnaire data suggest that students had a wider range of motivations for learning speaking – such as better employment and educational opportunities in the future – not only for reasons related to assessment. Students reported that they were interested in speaking irrespective of the government decision to test speaking. This contradicted the teachers’ opinion that students would focus more on speaking once it was tested.

This raises the question of why speaking had not been focused on in the classroom before the 2011 change. Possible reasons might include teachers’ own perceptions that poor performance by their students could negatively affect their reputation. This might be the reason the teachers focused more on reading and writing and less on speaking.

Evidence from the washback literature also suggests that these viewpoints might be attributed to teacher related factors, similar to those found in previous washback studies that teachers’ ‘test anxiety’ (Spratt 2005 p.18), and ‘feelings of guilt and frustration’ (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996 p.292) at their students’ poor test performance (see Chapter 2 – section 2.4.1).

This could explain why some teachers, although approving of the teaching of speaking within the ELSP, did not approve of the testing of speaking, mentioning student and classroom factors as reasons for their disapproval and why teachers focused more on reading and writing skills before the assessment change.

Previous washback studies also suggest that teachers may wrongly blame students for narrow test preparation activities, but that students may be more open to a wider

range of activity than the teachers believe (see for example Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996).

Even though the teaching and learning of speaking skills were part of the English curriculum before the assessment change, speaking skills were not the focus for teachers. This seemed to be largely because speaking skills were not assessed at the school or national level (see Chapter 1 – section 1.2). However, it was the responsibility of officials, such as Assistant Directors of Education (English) (ADE), In-Service Advisors (ISA) to monitor the teaching, learning, and assessment activities in the classroom and to submit reports to their superiors to guide further reforms. The lack of monitoring on the part of officials to confirm whether speaking had been taught in the classroom might have been another reason for the lack of focus on speaking by teachers prior to the introduction of the assessment change.

In summary, the overall discussions of findings show that there were few important gaps between the intentions of the policy makers and the participants at the intervening and implementing level. Both the SBA and the NTS had some of the intended effects on teachers' and students' perceptions and classroom practices towards the assessment change. However, several factors appeared to mediate the effects of the assessment change on teaching and learning activities.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This chapter recapitulates where and how the research was conducted to achieve its purposes. It summarises the findings of data collected from participants at different levels of the education system, employing various data collection instruments. It then outlines the contributions of the study to the washback literature and implications for the Sri Lankan context. Finally, it discusses the limitations of the study and presents some recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

7.1 Summary of the study

This study was conducted in government schools in Batticaloa, in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka, to investigate the washback of an assessment change on teachers' and students' perceptions and on teaching and learning activities in the classroom. After developing an appropriate conceptual framework, which provided a means for exploring whether the changes occurred as intended (see Chapter – section 2.8), this study employed a mixed methods research approach collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The study was conducted in two phases: A pilot study was carried out in Phase one to gain a general picture of the phenomenon under investigation and, importantly, to trial the data collection instruments designed for the main study. Phase two involved:

- semi-structured interviews with participants at the intervening level to find out any gaps in translating messages from the decision making level to the implementing level;

- questionnaires to teachers and students to find out their perceptions and attitudes to the assessment change;
- classroom observation of teaching activities in speaking classes.

The study explored how teachers perceived the assessment change and the effects of the assessment change on teachers' classroom practices. It also showed how teacher, student, and context-related factors influenced the degree of washback, and whether this washback was positive or negative. In addition, it identified which of the intentions of the policy makers had or had not been met, as well as some unintended consequences that emerged in teaching and learning activities because of the assessment change.

7.2 Summary of findings

In this section, I briefly summarise the findings of this study with respect to the three research questions.

(1) Are there any gaps between the participant's intentions at the decision making level and the intervening level participants' understanding of the assessment change?

In Chapter 4, I examined, through semi-structured interviews, the understanding of the intervening level participants (ADE, ISA, MT – participants who come in between the decision making level – policy-makers – and the implementing level – teachers and students, see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.1) about the intentions of the assessment change in order to find out whether there were any gaps in translating the messages from the policy making level to the intervening level:

- The participants at the intervening level were supportive of the change.

The findings of the semi-structured interviews with participants at the intervening level indicated that they were supportive of the assessment change, and that speaking should be focused on in classroom teaching and learning activities. No important gaps between the policy makers' intentions and intervening level participants' understanding of the change were found:

- The participants were satisfied with the preparations.

Most of the participants at the intervening level were satisfied with the preparations introduced to support the implementation of the change, such as the provision of teacher training and Teacher Guide:

- Both the SBA and the NTS had an effect on teachers and students.

The intervening level participants claimed that both the SBA and the NTS had an effect on teachers' and students' teaching and learning activities.

They claimed that the teachers' attitudes and classroom practices towards teaching, learning and assessment of speaking had changed after the 2011 change (as part of the ELSP introduced in 2011, and that there was planning to assess speaking at the school level and national level). They further reported that teachers allocated more time for speaking in the classroom, that teachers covered more of the speaking activities allocated for a school term in the prescribed books, that teachers employed more group work activities in speaking classes, and that use of English dominated the speaking classes. Intervening level participants also reported that student involvement in speaking activities had increased.

However, they found it hard to say whether it was the SBA or the NTS that had greater effect on teachers' and students' focus on speaking since the assessment change:

- Postponement of the NTS and the uncertainty about the weighting of the SBA might reduce teachers' and students' focus on speaking.

The intervening level participants were concerned that the continual postponement of the NTS and the uncertainty about the weighting of the SBA would make the teachers and students return to focussing more on reading and writing as they had in the past, before the ELSP was introduced in 2011.

(2) A. What are the teachers' perceptions of the (washback) effect on their teaching activities and their students' learning activities of the;

a. Proposed National Test of Speaking?

b. School Based Assessment of Speaking?

In Chapter 5, I presented and discussed the findings of teachers' perceptions of the washback of the assessment change on teaching and learning activities in their speaking classes.

Research question 2 was investigated using a questionnaire (see Chapter 3 – section 3.5). The findings of the questionnaire survey with teachers at the implementing level showed that they had mostly positive attitude towards the assessment change. All of them approved of the emphasis on learning speaking in the ELSP, and many reasons were given by the participants for their approval of learning speaking (see Chapter 5 – section 5.3).

The findings also indicated that there were changes in teachers' practices:

- The content and method of speaking classes changed.

The teachers reported allocating more time for speaking, that more speaking activities were allocated from the prescribed books for each term, and that they changed their methods of teaching speaking:

- Students focused more on speaking.

The teachers also reported that students had become more interested in speaking and focused more on speaking activities in the prescribed books since the assessment change. From the teachers' point of view, it might have been the decision to test speaking made the students focus more on speaking.

The questionnaire data indicated that these changes were generally in line with the policy intentions. However, it was also found that:

- The intended changes were limited due to the following factors;
 - Continual postponement of the NTS and uncertainty about the weighting of the SBA might make the teachers and students focus less on speaking.

Some of the teachers expressed that uncertainty about the weighting of the SBA marks towards the final grading made teachers and students considered this it less important. They also expressed in their written comments their concerns about the continual postponement of the NTS making the students focus less on this skill. These concerns about the NTS and the SBA, however, might have affected

teachers' responses to questionnaire items directly related to the NTS and the SBA and might also have prevented the potential effects of these assessments on their teaching activities from being realised:

- The ability level of the students also influenced the intended changes.

Some of the teacher participants claimed that the current English proficiency level of their students was influential in their speaking lessons. The teachers stated that when the ability level of the students was low, the students needed more explanation of the speaking activities to be conducted and the teachers themselves had to use more class time and also more L1 in the classroom activities:

- Not all the teachers were satisfied with the teacher training.

Some teachers were not satisfied with the short duration of the teacher training, and with the teacher training skills of the resource persons involved in the training:

- Some of the teachers expressed dissatisfaction of available classroom conditions for implementing the change

A smaller number of teachers were dissatisfied with the available classroom conditions for teaching speaking, for example, the large number of students in the speaking classes meant that the teachers had to spend more class time for arranging the classrooms for group work activities.

In Chapter 5, I presented and discussed the findings of the questionnaire survey with students about their perceptions of the washback of the speaking test on their learning activities and their teachers' teaching activities in the speaking classes. The relevant part of research question two was:

B. What are the students' perceptions of the (washback) effect of the;

a. Proposed National Test of Speaking on their teachers teaching activities and their own learning activities?

b. School Based Assessment of Speaking on their teachers' teaching activities and their own learning activities?

- The students were generally supportive of the assessment change.

The questionnaire survey findings showed that the students were in general supportive of the assessment change. The students reported that the decision to test speaking would help them improve their speaking ability. However, their reasons for focusing on speaking were beyond merely preparing for the NTS or SBA:

- The students perceived that the assessment change made the teachers focus more on speaking.

Many students voiced their opinion that the introduction of speaking tests made their teachers focus more on teaching speaking in the classes, and their teachers started to focus more on the speaking activities in the English Pupil's Book and English Workbook, and English was used more as the language of instruction in speaking classes since the introduction of the assessment change:

- There was a mismatch between the policy makers' and teachers' assumptions about students' focus on speaking skill and the students' own perceptions about the importance of speaking skill.

The policy makers and the teachers assumed that testing speaking would motivate students to focus more on speaking. However, the students' comments suggest that they were interested in learning speaking not only for assessment-related reasons but for other reasons such as future career development as well.

The findings of both the teacher and the student questionnaire data indicated that even though the NTS was a high-stakes test when compared to the SBA, and the NTS would make up 20% of the final grade for English in the GCE O level examination (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5), it was hard to ascertain whether the NTS or the SBA had more effect on teaching and learning activities (see Chapter 5 – section 5.4 above). Both the teachers and students preferred the speaking assessments at the school level rather than at the national level.

c. What are the observable washback effects of the Proposed National Test of Speaking and School Based Assessment of Speaking on teachers' practices?

I investigated this research question using classroom observations and follow-up interviews. In Chapter 6, I presented and discussed the findings of classroom observations on the teaching activities in the speaking classes:

- The contents of speaking classes resembled the NTS.

The classroom observations showed that the contents of most of the teaching lessons in the speaking classes resembled the contents of the planned NTS. The classroom observations confirmed that the teachers and students spent most of their class time focusing on preparing for the NTS, which they considered higher-stakes than the SBA:

- The methods of teaching changed.

The observations also showed that teachers employed student-centred teaching methods in the speaking classes: substantial proportions of class time was allocated to students' engagement in speaking classes, for example, by employing group work activities in their speaking classes, and English was used as the language of instruction more than Tamil in speaking classes.

However, the findings indicated that even though the teachers had changed their methodology, this was not consistently effective. Only some of the students in a group or in the class were observed engaged in speaking activities, but others spent most of their class time listening to the teachers or their colleagues who dominated group work activities in speaking classes:

- Poor classroom conditions limited teachers' use of student-centred learning activities.

It was found from the classroom observations that the facilities available for teaching speaking such as an activity room for speaking, and the classroom-setting for group work activities, were not the same in each zone. Most of the teachers wanted to have a separate room for group work activities in the speaking classes,

but only a few schools had set up an activity room with computer facilities for speaking activities under the ELSP. The classroom observations suggest that the teachers who did not have an activity room in their schools had to spend more class time arranging classrooms for group work activities and this limited their students' speaking activities because of disturbance to adjacent classes. The available classroom facilities affected the time spent on student engagement in the speaking classes.

The follow-up interviews and review of lesson plans identified that changes observed in the speaking classes were found to be dependent on individual teacher differences, factors related to the students, the availability of resources and the stakes and weighting of the assessments.

7.3 Contributions and implications

The findings of this study may have important implications for the washback literature and for policy implementations and assessment changes related to the ELSP in particular. The contributions and implications of the study are presented in relation to two areas: the washback literature and the Sri Lankan context.

7.3.1 Contributions to the washback literature

This is to my knowledge the first study to investigate the effects of the assessment change within the ELSP on teaching and learning of L2 English speaking skills in Sri Lanka, building on Wall's study (see Chapter 2 – section 2.7).

First, as suggested by Wall (2005), this present study investigated the educational settings before the implementation of the assessment change, especially the

classroom teaching and learning activities, for comparison purposes through interviews with participants at the intervening level (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.1.2). Wall's (2005) suggestion that the investigation of washback needs a holistic approach covering both classroom settings and macro-context were also considered in the research design by employing classroom observations on teaching and learning activities, and interviews with participants at the decision making level.

Also taking on Wall's (2005) suggestion, this study employed a mixed methods research approach. The operational model proposed by Wall (2005) to analyse not only the pedagogic practices followed in the antecedent period but also the characteristics of the user system – the context into which the change is introduced – and the characteristics of the principal stakeholders – teachers and students – of educational reforms was also used in this study.

Therefore, this present study is one of the few studies, along with Cheng (2005) and Wall (2005), which employed a holistic approach and mixed methods to examine perspectives from all the important stake-holders in the assessment change: policy makers (decision making level – through semi-structured interview and reviewing documents), directors of education in-service advisors, master trainers (intervening level – through semi-structured interviews), and teachers and students (implementing level – through survey questionnaires and classroom observations).

The present study complemented Wall's (2005) study in that it investigated the washback effects of the SBA on speaking, and the planned NTS, while Wall's (2005) study mainly focused on the effects of the reading and writing components

of the new GCE O level test on teaching. Another contribution is that this study includes students as an important stake-holder group, whereas Wall (2005) did not include students as the main participants in her study.

The findings affirm the role that high-stakes tests have in influencing teaching practices in English classrooms in Sri Lanka (and potentially in other contexts). Empirical studies carried out by researchers in the field of language testing, for example, Cheng (2005), Wall (2005), Green (2007a), Jiang and Sharpling (2011), and some review studies by Bailey (1996) and Spratt (2005), to investigate the effects of high-stakes test on teaching confirmed the influence of testing on teaching (see also Chapter 2 – section 2.3.1 for more details of aspects of teaching and learning that are influenced by testing).

The previous washback literature showed that language tests can influence various aspects of teaching and learning. For instance, studies have shown that tests influenced the content of language lessons (see for example Alderson and Wall 1993, Cheng 2005, Wall 2005), and that teachers allocated more class time for assessment-related activities (see for example Read and Hayes 2003). The findings of this study indicated that changes made to the system of assessment in Sri Lanka that is the decision to test speaking, did bring about changes in the content of English lessons and the class time allocated for teaching and learning activities related to the assessment, thus consistent with these previous studies.

On the other hand, while some previous washback studies found that assessment changes had less effect on methods of teaching than on contents of teaching (Alderson and Wall 1993, Cheng 2005, Wall 2005), the classroom observations in

this study showed that teachers had changed their teaching methodology in the speaking classes (see Chapter 6 – section 6.2.2). The reasons might be that ample preparations were in place for the implementation of the assessment change such as teacher training, the Teacher Guide, and a television programme on how to conduct speaking lessons, which was telecast on national television. Overall, then, the findings of this study in relation to washback effect on teaching methods are more optimistic than those from some of the previous washback studies.

With respect to the characteristics of washback reviewed in Chapter 2 – section 2.3.2), previous washback studies found that the changes made to the system of assessment had the potential to produce intended, positive washback effects on classroom practices. For example, Ferman (2003) found that the EFL Oral Matriculation Test made the teachers and students focus more on oral skills, and Jiang and Sharpling (2011) found that changes in the mode of assessment positively influenced students' language learning strategies (see Chapter 2 – section 2.3.1). The findings of this study, as reported above, are consistent with these studies, showing that changes made to the system of assessment have the potential to produce intended, positive washback effects on classroom practices.

However, previous studies found that assessment changes could also bring about unintended changes, especially when the tests were considered by teachers and students as high-stakes. For example, Andrews *et al.* (2002), in their study on Use of English oral examination in Kong Hong, found unintended learning outcomes such as rote-learning of test strategies by students (see Chapter 2 – section 2.3.2.1). The present study also found that assessment change within the ELSP had brought

about unintended changes such as narrowing the curriculum such that the contents of teaching were similar to the assessment tasks (see Chapter 6 - section 6.1.1.1).

Some of the previous studies on washback found that a particular component of a test could influence teaching. This is what is termed ‘specific washback’ in the washback literature. For example, Stecher *et al.* (2003) found that a writing test had widely influenced the content of writing and methods used to teach writing (see also Chapter 2 – section 2.3.2.3).

Similarly, this study showed that a particular component of a test – speaking – influenced the content of the speaking curriculum and methods used to teach speaking.

Moreover, the findings of the classroom observation suggested that the NTS, which was considered as more high-stakes than the SBA, had greater washback effects than the SBA. The teachers were found to focus on speaking activities which resembled the speaking tasks in the planned NTS. This is in line with the previous washback literature which shows that washback can vary in intensity and that the intensity is often associated with the importance given to the results by the stakeholders (see for example Green 2013, and also Chapter 2 – section 2.3.2.4).

It has been argued in the literature that washback from high-stakes tests cannot be considered to be an automatic consequence of a test alone, but depends on the interplay between various factors. This implies that several mediating factors should be taken into consideration before establishing a link between an assessment change and washback (see for example Green 2007a, Jiang and Sharpling 2011, Xiao *et al.* 2011, and also Chapter 2 – section 2.4). In line with the literature, this

study has also found several factors other than the assessment itself that mediate the existence and direction of washback, some of them being micro-contextual factors including teacher and student-related factors, and others being macro-contextual factors including geographical factors and politics (see Chapter 5 – section 5.4 for summary of teacher questionnaire findings).

Apart from contributing to the existing literature on the nature and characteristics of washback, this study adds support to methodological suggestions in previous works on how to investigate washback. As recommended by some washback researchers (Alderson and Wall 1993, Cheng 2005, Green 2007a), this study adopted a mixed-methods approach that involved using different form of research instrumentation including reviewing relevant documents and conducting semi-structured interviews, questionnaire survey and classroom observation with follow-up interviews, which has proven useful in this study. First, since I was not able to observe classes before the change had been implemented (this study started this study after the ELSP was introduced in 2011), I had to look for another method to collect information about the instructional practices in the classroom before the change. The semi-structured interviews provided information about teaching and learning activities before the assessment change. The data collected through teacher and student questionnaires provided information about their attitude and perceptions of the change. However, these self-report data were not enough to understand the actual classroom practices of the teachers and students in the speaking classes. Therefore, I employed classroom observations with follow-up interviews.

In this way, data from participants at different levels – decision making, intervening, implementing (Cheng 2005) – who have different responsibilities in the process of an assessment change were collected and analysed. This was helpful in gaining insights on the intentions of the change, and, more importantly, whether there were any gaps in translating policy intentions from one level to the next. The study found that participants at the intervening level were satisfied with the preparations made to implement the assessment change (see Chapter 4 – section 4.3), but some of the teachers – agents at the implementing level – were not satisfied with the teacher training (see Chapter 5 – section 5.3.3). It also found that teachers were of the opinion that students would not focus on speaking unless it was tested, but students reported a desire to develop speaking skills irrespective of the assessment change.

The triangulation of data collected through various methods and from participants at different levels therefore allowed me to examine the washback phenomenon from different participants' perspectives and to cross-check the validity of the data or claims from different sources. As such, this study lends further support to the importance of a mixed-methods research approach as presented in the previous washback studies.

7.3.2 Implications for the Sri Lankan context

In addition to the various implications for washback literature, this study has ramifications for the English teaching and testing in Sri Lanka.

This study has not only collected evidence of how the English teachers in Sri Lanka perceived the assessment change and how the assessment change might have

affected their classroom practices, but has also offered some insights into how this assessment change can be improved to achieve its intended purpose. This study has implications for participants at the three levels:

7.3.2.1 Decision making level

- Timely implementation of an assessment change is important for achieving intended changes.

The teachers and students were supportive of the decision that the emphasis was on learning speaking within the ELSP. However, the teachers expressed concerns over the continual postponement of the NTS, and they felt that students would not continue to focus on speaking if the NTS was not implemented as planned. Correspondingly, the students felt that if the NTS were not conducted, then speaking would not be focused on in the classroom by their teachers. In either case, the immediate implementation of the NTS was felt to be important for the ELSP to achieve its purpose. Therefore, the participants at the decision making level should make arrangements to administer the first NTS as soon as possible. If the authorities find it difficult to conduct a nation-wide large scale speaking test due to practical difficulties such as constraints of time, cost and training people to assess the speaking performance of students in the NTS (Samaraweera, *interview*), they might look at alternative ways of assessing speaking.

One possible approach that the educational authorities might take would be to increase the stakes of the SBA by increasing its weighting in the subject's final grading. This may help the educational authorities reduce the burden of large-scale nation-wide assessment which involves a lot of planning, and human and financial

resources. However, previous washback studies suggest that students' perceptions of the effects of SBA on learning vary according to their language competency (Cheng *et al.* 2011). Therefore, the authorities should take the student factors into consideration before using the SBA for speaking in place of an external test. They should also have a mechanism in place to ensure the issues related to validity in SBAs especially when assessments are conducted by school teachers. This might be done through the supervision and monitoring by In-service Advisors or Master Trainers.

- Students' voices should be heard when important decisions on assessment changes are to be made.

The questionnaire survey suggested that there was a difference between teachers' and students' attitudes towards teaching and learning speaking in the classroom. The teachers' questionnaire survey suggested that teachers were of the opinion that if speaking was not tested like reading and writing, then the students would not focus on learning speaking (see Chapter 5 – section 5.3.13). However, results of the student survey suggested that the students' reasons for learning speaking were not limited to preparation for the SBA or the NTS. They had broader objectives in learning speaking, although they also raised concerns that if speaking was not tested, then teachers would not focus on it in the classrooms (see Chapter 5 – section 5.5.10 for student questionnaire findings). Therefore, students can also be involved along with other stakeholders in making decisions about assessment reforms (Cheng 2005).

- A feasibility study is important for successful implementation of the assessment reform.

The educational authorities should conduct a feasibility study before introducing a major assessment reform programme such as implementing the assessments of speaking within the ELSP. They should especially focus on the factors which may prevent the successful implementation of educational reforms. For example, the policy makers noted that cost and training people for the assessment of speaking were some of the reasons for the continual postponement of the NTS. Therefore, a feasibility study will help the policy makers find the factors which may prevent the successful implementation of reforms in advance, so that they can identify measures to address these issues.

The postponement of the NTS was the second instance in Sri Lanka of speaking assessment not being implemented as planned. The first instance was within the revised Sri Lanka O level examination in 1989, when it was decided to test speaking along with reading and writing. However, the decision was never implemented (see Chapter 2 – section 2.7). This might mean that teachers and learners, as important stakeholders in implementing any educational reforms, were losing confidence towards future educational reforms in Sri Lanka. Therefore, since most of the teachers and students in this study considered that testing speaking would make them focus more on speaking, policy makers should implement the reform as planned rather than trying to partially implement the changes: implementing only the SBA along with other preparations such as teacher training and Teacher Guide but not the NTS.

7.3.2.2 Intervening level

The In-Service Advisers(ISAs) and Master Trainers(MTs) are responsible for monitoring teaching and learning activities in the classroom, and organise pre-service and in-service teacher training for implementation of curriculum reforms in Sri Lanka (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.1.2). In this study, the intervening level participants reported that teachers focused more on particular skills in their teaching activities. Therefore, the ISAs and MTs should monitor and find out, through their visits to schools by observing classroom teaching and assessment activities and analysis of lesson plans prepared by teachers, why teachers focus on some particular skills and ignore other skills in their classroom teaching and assessment activities. It should be noted that the textbooks and workbook include activities for reading, writing, speaking, listening and grammar skills (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.3). However, the policy makers complained that teachers focused more on reading and writing since these two skills were tested in the GCE O level. The ISAs and MTs could play an important role to make sure that all the skills in the prescribed English books are implemented without any undue importance being given to skills which are tested.

The findings of this study show that following the introduction of the ELSP, teachers used learner-centred approaches in the speaking classes: more class time was allocated for students learning speaking, English dominated the classroom discussions, and there were more group work activities. However, classroom observations indicated that group work activities were often dominated by particular students. These issues could be remedied through teacher education and teacher training in communicative teaching and testing activities. A comprehensive

teacher training programme designed to familiarise teachers with both the theoretical and practical aspects of communicative teaching and testing methodologies would help them to practise more learner-centred approaches.

- The implementation of assessment change should be monitored.

One of the objectives of assessment change was that speaking would be focused more by teachers and students, and the policy makers also expected that the assessment change would enable the students to speak English in a natural setting when they leave school (Chapter 1 – section 1.5). However, the findings suggested that teachers and students narrowed the contents of teaching and learning activities such that they became similar to the activities in the assessments (Chapter 6 – section 6.1.1.1).

Therefore, following the introduction of an assessment reform, teachers' and students' practices in the speaking classes should be monitored by experts to identify whether the changes are implemented as intended, and to identify any factors which work against the intended changes.

Importantly, such experts can suggest further reforms in the assessment to the relevant authorities based on their findings to make the intended change a reality.

7.3.2.3 Implementing level

The previous washback literature shows that teachers' awareness of the intentions of the assessment changes is one of the important factors in mediating washback (see Chapter 2 – section 2.4.1.3). The classroom observations showed that most of the speaking activities were similar to the activities in the planned NTS (see Chapter

6 – section 6.1.1.1). However, the main objective of the assessment change within the ELSP was to make the students to speak English in practical situations (see Chapter 1 – section 1.5). Therefore, it is important for the teachers to make sure that the activities practised in the speaking classes would enable the students to use English as intended in the change.

7.4 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

This section acknowledges the limitations of the study and proposes suggestions for future research.

7.4.1 Limitations of the study

- The study was limited to a short period of time.

The literature shows that washback can evolve over time (Shohamy *et al.* 1996, Wall and Horak 2011). Therefore, a longitudinal study might have revealed more about the effects of the assessment change on teaching and learning activities. The data for the main study of this research was collected over a period of six months. It was beyond the practicalities of this study to conduct follow-up investigations on the effect of the change over time due to the limited time available for this PhD research.

- The study was limited to a relatively small number of participants and relatively small geographical area.

The study was confined to investigating the washback effects of speaking assessments on a relatively small number of teachers and students from a relatively narrow geographical region in Sri Lanka. The size and geographical restriction of

the sample have limited the generalisability of the findings to a certain extent. However, it seems likely that other regions of the country are affected by similar issues. The data obtained for the main study could be utilised as base-line data for future washback studies on the assessment change within the ELSP.

- The first administration of the NTS was delayed.

A less predictable limitation of the study was caused by the continual postponement of the NTS. At the outset, I was interested in evaluating the washback of an operational test, but the postponement of the first administration meant that the test was never implemented within the timeframe of my study. The postponement of the NTS might have affected the findings of this research. The NTS was considered as a high-stakes test and might have affected the teaching and learning activities more if the NTS had been implemented as planned in 2012.

- Students were not involved in interviews.

One methodological limitation was that the students were involved in the questionnaire survey and classroom observations, but not interviewed after the questionnaire survey or classroom observations. This was due to the practical constraints that involving students for research purposes in Sri Lanka required permission from several levels of the educational system hierarchy. My request for interviews with students was not considered by the authorities. There were also challenges involved in gaining any access to students: I was not permitted to contact the students directly for the questionnaire survey and these had to be administered through their respective class teachers (see Chapter 3 – section 3.7.3.1).

Interviews with students might have provided deeper insights into their responses to some of the questions in the questionnaire and their learning activities observed in the classroom observations, for an example, why or why not they used more English in the group work activities in the speaking classes. However, this study is one of the few studies which have involved both students and teachers (implementing level) together with other participants at the intervening and decision making level, and had used both quantitative and qualitative data to study the effects of testing on teaching and learning activities.

- There was no direct evidence about pedagogical practices before the assessment change.

Another limitation was that this study did not collect any direct evidence about pedagogical practices before the introduction of the assessment change. The evidence would have been useful for comparing the antecedent conditions with the practices in the teaching and learning activities in the classroom following the change. However, it was possible to collect information about the pedagogical practices before the change through interviews with intervening level participants.

- Classroom observations were limited to speaking classes.

Another limitation is that only the speaking classes were observed, but not the reading and writing classes. This shortcoming was compensated for to some extent through interviews with participants at the intervening level. The intervening level participants provided information about teaching practices in the reading and writing classes. Nonetheless, it is possible that the observation of reading and writing classes might have offered more insights into teaching practices for

comparison purposes. The observation of reading and writing classes could have helped me find out if the teaching methodology observed in the speaking classes were not the same in the reading and writing classes. This would help establish a stronger evidential link that the assessment change within the ELSP had effects on teaching speaking, rather than depending on other sources for information about the reading and writing classes.

7.4.2 Suggestions for further research

The conclusions and limitations of this study bring forth some avenues for further research.

- A series of studies on the same reform will be useful.

This study investigated the effects of only one aspect of a test (focused on assessments of speaking) by a single researcher. However, it would be useful if a group of researchers could work together to carry out a series of studies on aspects of the same test part (speaking), as well as different parts of the test (reading, writing, and listening) within the same educational context involving a similar type of participants employing the same data collection instruments. In this way, researchers can investigate a range of different aspects of this complex washback phenomenon.

It would also be useful if these studies on washback effects of a particular test in a particular context are carried out over time to affirm whether the effects are still persistent in the system and how they are affected by other changes that occur.

Wall (2012) argues that researchers should develop their washback research by building on previous washback studies and reviewing more recent washback literature related to the theme they are interested in:

The washback literature is full of interesting individual studies but it seems to lack an overall coherence (ibid p.89).

Wall (2012) criticised the fact that washback researchers do not often build their own research on previous studies. She notes that:

... it is rare to see research that truly builds on work that has been done previously, which replicates or only slightly adapts the work of others (ibid, p.89).

Wall (2012) suggests that it would be useful if future washback studies were to be designed and conducted as a continuation of previous studies. This present study has been built on Wall's (2005) investigation of the Sri Lankan O level Evaluation project to investigate whether the new test had created any effects in the classroom. In the first instance, this present washback study could be used as base-line study for future research and could be extended to represent the entire country. Data could be collected from participants at three levels (see Chapter 3 – section 3.4.1) representing the entire population in Sri Lanka in the form of a longitudinal study, which would explore the degree of persistence of the washback effects observed in this study over a period of time. This would help build up a comprehensive picture of washback of a particular test in a particular context over time. The present study paves the way for such future studies to be conducted.

- Exploiting online technology will be useful in washback research.

This present study identified the sample size and geographical restriction as limitations, which limited the generalizability of the findings (see section 7.4.1 above for details about limitations of the study). It will be useful to exploit the internet facilities to involve more participants representing the wider population in the research. The online communication technology will be helpful to researchers to approach a larger number of participants and to make their research findings more generalisable to other settings as well.

7.5 Closing remarks

This research study is the first on the assessment changes within the ELSP. It is my hope that the implications, suggestions and recommendations of this study will benefit the education system of Sri Lanka in general, and English language education in the country in particular. This study may help the relevant government authorities to develop appropriate policies and administration of assessment changes in general, as well as further reforms on speaking assessment within the ELSP in particular. These steps will enhance teachers' instructional practices in the classroom, which may in turn boost learners' motivation to learn English effectively. I would recommend that the policy makers involve teachers and students at the initial stages of future assessment reform programmes, incorporating their perceptions and attitudes towards the assessment change rather than expecting them to simply conform to the policies, in order to achieve the intended changes.

Further, this study suggests that SBA shows some promise in ensuring that speaking is assessed in an ESL/EFL context, with teachers and students in this study both

having positive attitudes towards the SBA (see Chapter 5 – sections 5.4, 5.5.8 and 5.6). Standardised testing of speaking at the national level has proven difficult in the Sri Lankan context, as reflected in the continual postponement of the first administration of the NTS since 2012. SBA could be a helpful means to overcome the difficulties in conducting the NTS for large numbers of candidates.

REFERENCES

- Alderson, J C (1992) Guidelines for the Evaluation of Language Education, in Alderson, J C and Beretta (Eds), *Evaluating Second Language Education*, 274-304, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Alderson, J C and Hamp-Lyons, L (1996) TOEFL Preparation Courses: A Study of Washback, *Language Testing* 13 (3), 280-297.
- Alderson, J C and Wall, D (1993) Does Washback Exist? *Applied Linguistics* 14(2), 115-129.
- Allen C J (1993) The Teaching of English as a Second Language, Sri Lanka/ Norway/ UNESCO/ FUNDS-IN-TRUST Programme, *Report of the Impact Study and Evaluation Mission*, Sri Lanka.
- Allwright, D and Bailey, K M (1991) *Focus on the Language Classroom: An Introduction to Classroom Research for Language Teachers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Andrews, S Fullilove, J and Wong, Y (2002) Targeting Washback: A Case Study, *System* 30, 207-223.
- Andrews, S (2003) Washback and Curriculum Innovation in Cheng, L, Watanabe, Y and Curtis A (Eds), *Washback in Language Testing: Research Contexts and Methods*, 37-50, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Atugoda, S (2010) Message to the Teacher, in *Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English "English as a Life Skill"*, xvii, Sri Lanka: Ministry of Education.
- Bachman, L F and Palmer, A S (1996) *Language Testing in Practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bachman, L F and Palmer, A S (2010) *Language Assessment in Practice: Developing Language Assessments and Justifying Their Use in the Real World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bailey, K D (1994) *Methods of Social Research* (fourth edition), New York: The Free Press.
- Bailey, K M (1996) Working for Washback: A Review of the Washback Concept in Language Testing, *Language Testing* 13, 257-279.
- Bailey, K M (1999) *Washback in Language Testing*, Princeton, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service.
- Ball, S J (1990) *Politics and Policy Making in Education*, London: Routledge.

- Biggs, J B (1995) Assumptions Underlying New Approaches to Educational Assessment. *Curriculum Forum* 4 (2), 1-22.
- Brannen, J (1992) Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches: An Overview, in Brannen, J (Ed.) *Mixing Methods; Qualitative and Quantitative*, 3-37, Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Brown, J D (1997) Do Tests Washback on the Language Classroom? *The TESOLANZ Journal* 5 (5), 63-80.
- Brown, J D and Hudson, T (2002) *Criterion-Referenced Language Testing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bryman, A (1992), Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Further Reflections on Their Integration, in Brannen, J (Ed.) *Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Research*, 57-80, Burlington, VT: Ashbury.
- Buck, G (1988) Testing Listening Comprehension in Japanese University Entrance Examinations, *JALT Journal* 10 (1), 15-42.
- Burrows, C (1998) *Searching for Washback: An Investigation into the Impact on Teachers of the Implementation into the Adult Migrant English Program of the Certificate in Spoken and Written English*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Macquarie University: Sydney.
- Burrows, C (2003). Washback in Classroom-based Assessment: A Study of the Washback Effect in the Australian Adult Migrant English Program, in Cheng, L, Watanabe, Y and Curtis, A (Eds.) *Washback in Language Testing: Research Contexts and Methods*, 113-128, Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Canagarajah, A S (1993) Critical Ethnography of a Sri Lankan Classroom: Ambiguities in Student Opposition to Reproduction through ESOL, *TESOL Quarterly* 27 (4), 601-26.
- Chapman, D W and Snyder, C W (2000) Can High-stakes National Testing Improve Instruction: Re-examining Conventional Wisdom, *International Journal of Educational Development* 20 (6), 457-474.
- Charmaz, K (2005) Grounded Theory in the 21st Century: A Qualitative Method for Advancing Social Justice Research, in N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook Of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cheng, L (1997) How does Washback Influence Teaching? Implications for Hong Kong: *Language and Education* 11, 38-54.

Cheng, L (1998) Impact of a Public English examination Change on Students' Perceptions and Attitudes towards Their English Learning: *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 24, 279–301.

Cheng, L (2003) The Washback Effect of an Examination Change on Teachers' Perception towards Their Classroom Teaching, in Cheng, L, Watanabe, Y and Curtis, A (Eds.) *Washback in Language Testing: Research Contexts and Methods*, 147-170, Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cheng, L (2005) *Changing Language Teaching through Language Testing: A Washback Study*, Studies in Language Testing 21, Cambridge: UCLES/Cambridge University Press.

Cheng, L (2008) Washback, Impact and Consequences in Shohamy E and Hornberger N H (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Language and Education* 2 (7)349-364, New York, London: Springer.

Cheng, L and Curtis, A (2003) Washback or Backwash: A Review of the Impact of Testing on Teaching and Learning, in Cheng, L, Watanabe, Y and Curtis, A (Eds.) *Washback in Language Testing: Research Contexts and Methods*, 3-17, Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cheng, L Y, Andrews, S and Yu, Y (2011) Impact and Consequences of School-Based Assessment (SBA): Students' and Parents' Views of SBA in Hong Kong, *Language Testing* 28, 221–249.

Cohen, L (1976) *Educational Research in Classrooms and Schools: A Manual of Materials and Methods*, London: Harper and Row.

Cohen, L and Holliday (1982) *Statistics for Social Sciences*, London: Harper & Row.

Cohen, L and Manion, L (1989) *Research Methods in Education*, London: Routledge.

Cohen, L and Holliday, M (1996) *Practical Statistics for Students*, London: Paul Chapman.

Cohen, L, Manion, L and Morrison, K (2011) *Research Methods in Education*, London: Routledge.

Creswell, J (2009) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crooks, T J (1988) The Impact of Classroom Evaluation Practices on Students: *Review of Educational Research* 58, 438–481.

Dorabawila, S S K B M, Samita, S and Thattil, R O (2002) Classification of State Schools in Sri Lanka: *A Multivariate Approach Ceylon Journal of Science: Physical Sciences* 9 (1), 102-109.

Edirisinghe, A (2010) Message to the Teacher, in *Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English "English as a Life Skill"*, xiii, Sri Lanka: Ministry of Education.

Falvey, P (1996) The Education of Teachers of English in Hong Kong: A Case for Special Treatment, in Lopez-Real, F (Ed.) *Proceedings of An International Conference: Teacher Education in the Asian Region 1995*, 107-114, Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Institute of Education.

Ferman, I (2003) The Washback of an EFL National Oral Matriculation Test to Teaching and Learning, in Cheng, L, Watanabe, Y and Curtis, A (Eds) *Washback in Language Testing: Research Contexts and Methods*, 191-210, Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Fernando, S (2010) Message to the Teacher, in *Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English "English as a Life Skill"*, ix-xi, Sri Lanka: Ministry of Education.

Fernando, R V and Mallawa, M (2003) *Research Study on Implementation of Activity Based Oral English in the Primary Grades 1 & 2*, Sri Lanka.

Frederiksen, N (1984) The real test bias: Influences of testing on teaching and learning: *American Psychology* 39, 193–202.

Frederiksen, J R and Collins, A (1989) A System Approach to Educational Testing: *Educational Researcher* 18 (9), 27–32.

Freeman, D (1996) Redefining the Relationship between Research and What Teachers Know, in Bailey, K M and Nunan D (Eds.), *Voices from the Language Classroom: Qualitative Research in Second Language Education*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fullan, M G and Stiegelbauer, S (1991) *The new meaning of educational change*, London: Cassell Educational.

Gibbs, G (2007) *Analysing Qualitative Data*, London: Sage.

Green, A (2005) EAP Study Recommendations and Score Gains on the IELTS Academic Writing Test: *Assessing Writing* 10 (1), 44-60.

Green, A (2007a) IELTS Washback in Context: Preparation for Academic Writing in Higher Education: *Studies in Language Testing* 25, Cambridge: UCLES/ Cambridge University Press.

Green, A (2007b) Washback to Learning Outcomes: A Comparative Study of IELTS Preparation and University Pre-session Language Courses: *Assessment in Education* 14 (1), 76-96.

Green, A (2013) Washback in Language Assessment: *International Journal of English Studies* 13 (2), 39-51.

Gunawardena, G B (1991) *Educational Policy and Research in Sri Lanka: The Link and Future Challenges, Policy Review Series Paper No. 1*. Maharagama: National Institute of Education.

Gunawardena, C (2011) Translating Education Policy into Action in Sri Lanka: *Sri Lankan Journal of Social Sciences* 33/34 (1 and 2), 15-23.

Gunawardena, C and Lekamge, D (2004) Evaluation of the Implementation of the Junior Secondary Curriculum in Two Districts: *Ratnapura and Kalutara Study Series No. 10*, Narahenpita: National Education Commission.

Gunawardena, C Wijetunga, S and Perera, L P (2004) Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Implementation of Educational reforms at Secondary School Level (Grades 6 -11): *Study Series No. 9*, Narahenpita: National Education Commission.

Hammersley, M and Atkinson, P (1983) *Ethnography: Principles and practice*, London: Routledge.

Hamp-Lyons, L (1997) Washback, Impact and Validity, Ethical Concerns: *Language Testing* 14, 295–303.

Hamp-Lyons, L (1998) Ethical Test Preparation Practice, the Case of the TOEFL: *TESOL Quarterly* 33 (2), 329-337.

Hawkey, R (2006) Impact Theory and Practice, Studies of the IELTS test and Progetto Lingue 2000: *Studies in Language Testing* 24, Cambridge UCLES/Cambridge University Press.

Henrichsen, L E (1989) Diffusion of Innovations in English Language Teaching: *The ELEC effort in Japan, 1956-1968*, New York: Greenwood Press.

Herman, J L and Golan, S (1991) *Effects of Standardized Testing on Teachers and Learning-Another look: CSE Technical Report 334*, Los Angeles: University of California, Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing.

Heyneman, S P and Ransom, A W (1990) Using Examinations and Testing to Improve Educational Quality: *Educational Policy* 4 (3), 177-192.

Howe, R (2004) A Critique of Experimentalism: *Qualitative Inquiry* 10, 42-61.

Hughes, A (1988) Introducing a Needs-based Test of English Language Proficiency into an English-medium University in Turkey, in Hughes, A (Ed.), *Testing English for University*, 134-153, Oxford: Modern English Publications.

Hughes, A (1989) *Testing for Language Teachers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hughes, A (1993) *Backwash and TOEFL 2000*, unpublished manuscript, Reading: University of Reading.

Hughes, A (2003) *Testing for Language Teachers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

James, M (2000) Measured lives: The Rise of Assessment as the Engine of Change in English Schools: *Curriculum Journal*, 11 285-297.

Jayamanne, N (2010) Message to the Teacher, in *Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English "English as a Life Skill"*, xxi, Sri Lanka: Ministry of Education.

Jiang, X and Sharpling, G The Impact of Assessment Change on Language Learning Strategies: The Views of a Small Group of Chinese Graduate Students Studying in the UK: *Asian EFL Journal* 13 (4), 33-68.

Karunaratne, I M (2003) *Teaching English in Urban Sri Lanka: Some Pedagogical Issues*, Sri Lanka.

Karunaratne, I M (2009) *Teaching of English*, New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation.

Khaniyah, T R (1990) *Examinations as Instruments for Educational Change: Investigating the Washback Effect of the Nepalese English Exams*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Edinburgh: Edinburgh.

Kvale, S and Brinkmann, S (2009) *Interview: an Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, London: Sage.

Lam, H P (1993) *Washback – Can It be Quantified? A Study on the Impact of English Examinations in Hong Kong*, unpublished master's thesis, University of Leeds: Leeds.

Lam, H P (1994) Methodology Washback – An Insider's View, in Nunan, D, Berry, R and Berry V (Eds.), *Bringing about Change in Language Education: Proceedings of the International Language in Education Conference 1994*, Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 83-102.

Little, A W (2010) The Politics, Policies and Progress of Basic Education in Sri Lanka, *CREATE Research Monograph* 38, London: The Institute of Education.

- Lumley, T and Stoneman, B (2000) Conflicting Perspectives on the Role of Test Preparation in Relation to Learning: *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics* 5 (1), 50-80.
- Madaus, G F (1988) The Influence of Testing on the Curriculum, in L. N. Tanner (Ed.), *Critical Issues in Curriculum: Eighty-seventh year Book of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 83–121, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McNamara, T F (1996) *Measuring Second Language Performance*, Harlow: Longman.
- McNamara, T F (2000) *Language Testing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Messick, S (1989) Validity, in Linn, R (Ed.) *Educational measurement*, New York: ACE/Macmillan, 13-103.
- Messick, S (1994) The Interplay of Evidence and Consequences in the Validation of Performance Assessments: *Educational Researcher* 23 (2), 13-23.
- Messick, S (1996) Validity and Washback in Language Testing: *Language Testing* 13 (3), 241-256.
- Ministry of Education, (2004) The Development of Education: *National Report*, Sri Lanka: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education and Higher Education (1996) National Education Policy: *A Framework for Action on General Education*, Isurupaya: Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
- Ministry of Education (2010) Teacher Guide: *Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English*, Sri Lanka: Ministry of Education.
- Murray, R (2002) *How to Write a Thesis*, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- National Education Commission, (2003) *Envisioning Education for Human Development: Proposals for a National Policy Framework on General Education in Sri Lanka*, Nugegoda: Piyasiri Printing Systems.
- Onaiba, A F E (2013) *Investigating the Washback Effect of a Revised EFL Public Examination on Teachers' Instructional Practices, Materials and Curriculum*, unpublished PhD thesis, School of Education, University of Leicester: Leicester.
- Pan, Y (2009) The Social Impact of English Certification Exit Requirements in Taiwan: *Paper presented at Language Testing and Research Colloquium 2009*, Denver.

Parasmeswaram, R (2009) School Based Assessment a Failure?: *The Island*, 23 May 2009. Available online at: <http://www.island.lk/2009/05/23/satmag1.html> (Accessed 8 June 2015).

Pearson, I (1988) Tests as Levers for Change, in Chamberlain, D and Baumgardner, R (Eds.): *ESP in the Classroom, Practice and Evaluation*, *ELT Documents* 128, 98-107, London: Modern English Publications.

Pearson, I (1994) The National Certificate in English and Its Role in Examination Reform, in Flavel, R H (Ed.) *ELT Policy and Its impact: A Case Study. Review of English Language Teaching* 4 (1), 84-93, London: Modern English Publications in association with The British Council.

Perera, L and Dharmawadana, K (2000) The Primary Education Reform: The Gampaha Experience, in Little, A.W. (Ed.) *Primary Education Reform in Sri Lanka* Isurupaya: Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

Perrin, G C (2000) *The Effect of Multiple Choice Foreign Language Tests of Listening and Reading on Teacher Behaviour and Student Attitudes*, unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language, Lancaster University: Lancaster.

Popham, W J (1987) Two-plus Decades of Educational Objectives: *International Journal of Educational Research* 11 (1), 31-41.

Premachandra, K L (2010) Message to the Teacher, in *Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English "English as a Life Skill"*, xvi, Sri Lanka: Ministry of Education.

Qi, L (2005) Stakeholders' Conflicting Aims Undermine the Washback Function of a High-stakes Test: *Language Testing* 22 (2), 142-173.

Read, J and Hayes, B (2003) The Impact of the IELTS Test on Preparation for Academic Study in New Zealand: *IELTS Research Reports Volume 5*, 153-206, Canberra: IELTS Australia.

Rubasingha, S (1990) Do Disparities in Achievement among Different Types of Schools Reflect the Socio-economic Status of Its Clientele?: *Sri Lankan Journal of Education Research* 1 (1), 15-29.

Schofield, W (1996) Survey Sampling, in Sapsford, R and Jupp (Eds.), *Data Collection and Analysis*, 25-55, London: Sage and the Open University Press.

Sedere, U M (2010) Message to the Teacher, in *Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English "English as a Life Skill"*, xiv, Sri Lanka: Ministry of Education.

Shohamy, E (1997) Testing Methods, Testing Consequences: Are They Ethical? Are They Fair?: *Language Testing* 14 (3), 340–349.

Shohamy, E (2001) *The Power of Tests*, Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Shohamy, E, Donista-Schmidt, S and Ferman, I (1996) Test Impact Revisited: Washback Effect Overtime: *Language Testing* 13 (3), 298-317.

Sirisen, S S (2010) Message to the Teacher, in *Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English “English as a Life Skill”*, vii, Sri Lanka: Ministry of Education.

Smith, M L (1991) Put to the Test: The Effects of External Testing on Teachers: *Educational Researcher* 20 (5), 8-11.

Spada, N and Fröhlich, M (1995) *COLT Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching Observation Scheme, Coding Conventions and Applications*, Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research (NCELTR), Macquarie University.

Spolsky, B (1995) *Measured Words: The Development of Objective Language Testing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Spolsky, B (1996) The Examination of Classroom Backwash Cycle: Some Historical Cases, in D. Nunan, V. Berry and Berry V (Eds.): *Bringing about Change in Language Education*, 55-66, Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong, Department of Curriculum Studies,.

Spratt, M (2005) Washback and the Classroom: The Implication for Teaching and Learning of Studies of Washback from Exams: *Language Teaching Research* 9: 5-29.

Stecher, B, Chun, T and Barron, S (2003) The Effects of Assessment-driven Reform on the Teaching of Writing in Washington State, in Cheng, L, Watanabe, Y and Curtis, A (Eds.): *Washback in Language Testing, Research Contexts and Methods*, 53-71, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Stern, H H (1983) *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tsagari, D (2007) *Investigating the Washback Effects of the FCE Examination (Cambridge/ESOL) in Greece*, paper from Lancaster University.

Tsagari, D (2009) *The Complexity of Test Washback*: Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Turner, C E (2001) The Need for Impact Studies of L2 Performance Testing and Rating: Identifying Areas of Potential Consequences at All Levels of the Testing Cycle, in Brown, A *et al.* (Eds.), *Experimenting with Uncertainty*, Language

Testing Essays in Honour of Alan Davies: *Studies in Language Testing* 7, 138-149, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

van Lier, L (1989) Classroom Research in Second Language Acquisition: *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 10, 173-186.

Wall, D (1996) Introducing New Tests into Traditional Systems: Insights from General Education and from Innovation Theory: *Language Testing* 13 (3), 334–354.

Wall, D (1997) Impact and Washback in Language Testing, in Clapham, C and Corson, D (Eds.): *Language Testing and Assessment*, 291–302, Amsterdam: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Wall, D (1999) *The Impact of High-stakes Examinations on Classroom Teaching: A Case Study Using Insights from Testing and Innovation Theory*, unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University: Lancaster.

Wall, D (2005) The Impact of High-Stakes Testing on Classroom Teaching: A Case Study Using Insights from Testing and Innovation Theory: *Studies in Language Testing* 22, Cambridge: UCLES/ Cambridge University Press.

Wall, D (2012) Washback in Fulcher, G and Davidson (Eds.): *The Routledge Handbook of Language Testing*, 79-92, London: Routledge.

Wall, D and Alderson, J C (1993) Examining Washback, The Sri Lankan Impact Study: *Language Testing* 10 (1), 41-69.

Wall, D, Kalnberzina, V, Mazuoliene, Z and Truus, K (1996) The Baltic States Year 12 Examination Project: *Language Testing Update* 19, 15-27.

Wall, D and Horák, T (2006) *The impact of changes in the TOEFL examination on teaching and learning in central and eastern Europe: Phase1, the baseline study*, Princeton, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service.

Wall D and Horák, T (2008) *The Impact of Changes in the TOEFL Examination on Teaching and Learning in Central and Eastern Europe: Phase 2, Coping with Change*, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service.

Wall D and Horák, T (2011) The Impact of Changes in Testing in a Sample of Countries in Europe : Phase 3, The Role of the Course Book, and Phase 4, Describing Change: *TOEFL iBT Reports Series*, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service.

- Watanabe, Y (1996a) Does Grammar Translation Come from the Entrance Examination? Preliminary Findings from Classroom-based Research: *Language Testing* 13 (3), 318-333.
- Watanabe, Y (1996b) Investigating Washback in Japanese EFL Classrooms: Problems of Methodology, in G. Wigglesworth & C. Elder (Eds.): *The language Testing Circle: from Inception to Washback*, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: Applied Linguistics Association of Australia.
- Watanabe, Y (2000) Washback Effects of the English Section of the Japanese University Entrance Examinations on Instruction in Pre-college Level EFL: *Language Testing Update* 27, 42-47.
- Watanabe, Y (2003) Methodology in Washback Studies, in Cheng, L, Watanabe, Y and Curtis, A (Eds.) *Washback in Language Testing: Research Contexts and Methods*, 16-36, Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Weir, C J (2005) *Language Testing and Validation: An Evidence-based Approach*: Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wesdorp, H (1982) *Backwash Effects of Language Testing in Primary and Secondary Education*, Amsterdam: Stichting Centrum vooronderwijs onderzoek van de Universiteit van Amsterdam.
- Wilson, N and Mc Lean, S (1994) *Questionnaire Design: A Practical Introduction*, Newtown Abbey, Co. Antrim: University of Ulster Press.
- Wolf, A (1997) Growth Stocks and Lemons: Diplomas in the English Market-place 1976-1996: *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice* 4 (1), 33-50.
- World Bank, (2005). *Treasures of the Education System in Sri Lanka: Restoring Performance, Expanding Opportunities and Enhancing Prospects*. Colombo: World Bank.
- World Bank (2006), Advancing Sri Lanka's Education System through Quality Input. Retrieved January 10, 2012 from: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/223546-1206318727118/4808502-1206318753312/slknowledgechapter5.pdf>.
- Xiao, Y, Sharpling, G and Liu, H (2011) Washback of National Matriculation English Test on Students' Learning in the Chinese Secondary School Context: *Asian EFL Journal* 13 (3), 103-129.
- Xie, Q (2015) Do Component Weighting and Testing Method Affect Time Management and Approaches to test Preparation? A Study on the Washback Mechanism: *System* 50, 56-68.

Xie, Q and Andrews, S (2012) “Do Test Design and Uses Influence Test Preparation? Testing a Model of Washback with Structural Equation Modelling” *Language Testing* 30 (1), 49-70.

Zeider, M (1998) *Test Anxiety – The state of the Art*, New York: Plenum Press.

Zhang, Y and Elder, C (2009) Measuring the Speaking Proficiency of Advanced EFL Learners in China: The CET-SET Solution: *Language Assessment Quarterly* (6) 4, 298-314.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Information Sheet for Participants in a Doctoral Research Study

**University of Bedfordshire
CRELLA
Putteridge Bury
Hitchin Road
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU2 8LE
United Kingdom
T: +44 (0)1582 489303**

INFORMATION SHEET FOR THE PARTICIPANT IN THE INTERVIEW

Washback Effects of Speaking Assessment of Teaching English in Sri Lankan Schools (Research Title)

Thank you for your interest in participating in my postgraduate doctoral research project through a semi-structured interview. The participation is entirely voluntary choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. The aim of this research is to evaluate the impact of the speaking test on teaching under the English as a Life Skill programme introduced recently in Sri Lanka. This study does not deal with the quality of the professional training or advice, you provide to the teachers of English. Instead it deals with the impact of the speaking test on teaching. Besides, this study aims to provide some suggestions and recommend research findings to help teachers conduct more effective English language teaching.

I also include teachers who are teaching English in the GCE O level classes in selected schools in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka through questionnaire and classroom observations. The reason for my interest in including you in this research project is to approach my study from your point of view as you are closely related to English language teaching in Sri Lanka.

The interview will last around 60 minutes. Should you agree to participate in the semi-structured interview, this will be recorded, subject to your permission. Recordings of interviews will be deleted upon transcription. The participant will be named by alphabetical letters, numbers or similar symbols to identify the participant for the research purpose only. The participant's privacy and confidentiality will not be breached or communicated to a third party without the consent of the participant by the researcher. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. A copy of the findings of this research will be made available should you wish to see the final report.

The participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide not to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Researcher details: Singanayagam Umashankar
Email: singanayagam.umashankar@beds.ac.uk

Student Number: 1123399

This study is bound by the ethical expectations of the University of Bedfordshire, UK and if this study has harmed you in any way you can contact the same university using the details below for further advice and information:

Prof. Tony Green, Reader in Language Assessment
Email: tony.green@beds.ac.uk

Appendix 2

Consent Form for Participants
In a Doctoral Research Study

University of Bedfordshire
CRELLA
Putteridge Bury
Hitchin Road
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU2 8LE
United Kingdom
T: +44 (0)1582 489303

CONSENT FORM FOR THE PARTICIPANT IN THE INTERVIEW

Washback Effects of Speaking Assessment of Teaching English in Sri Lankan Schools (Research Title)

Tick in the box next to the statement you agree with

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.	
I give permission for the researcher to have access to my responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.	
I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential.	
I agree the data collected from me to be used in relevant future research.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the researcher should my details change.	

Name of participant	
Contact details of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of the researcher	
Signature	
Date	

Appendix 3

ADE

Participant ID: (ADE/BC)

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Time started:

Time ended:

Introductory statement: Thank you for agreeing to talk to me, I am interested in finding out about your views on the intension of the introduction of National Testing of Speaking (NTS) and the School Based Assessment of Speaking (SBAS) and their effect on the teaching and learning activities and also your responsibilities within the context of English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP).

It usually takes about 45 minutes to answer.

I will not use your name in any reports and I will not let other people listen to the recording or tell anyone about your personal answers but your responses will be used only for the stated purposes of the study.

Thank you for answering the questions below.

1. Can you explain what the reasons behind the introduction of ELSP?
2. Can you explain the teachers' attitude to teach speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
3. Can you explain the students' attitude to learn speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
4. Can you explain of the teachers' classroom practices to teach speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
5. Can you explain of the students' classroom practices to learn speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
6. Now, it has been decided to test speaking within the ELSP. What are the reasons that speaking is being tested? It is tested at two levels; SBAS and NTS. Why is it at two levels?
7. What are your responsibilities in the context of the new English as a Life Skill Programme?

How do you see your responsibilities in the context of the new ELSP?

(Comment on whether you are able to carry out your responsibilities, whether you are over -burdened, whether there are any hindrances in fulfilling your responsibilities)

8. Could you please explain what the Master Trainers/ In-Service Advisors have got to say about the changes that they had observed in the teachers attitude to teach speaking, which you feel, have been brought about by the implementation of?

- a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
- b. National Testing of Speaking?

(Comment on number of speaking activities covered in the English Pupils Textbook and English Workbook, use of Teacher Guide: Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English, content of

teaching, method of teaching, lesson planning, number of speaking tests conducted, medium of instruction, participant organisation, students modality)

Are these changes as intended by the Policy makers? If not, what might be the reasons for the unintended changes?

9. Could you please explain what the Master Trainers/ In-Service Advisors have got to say about the changes that they had observed in the students' attitude to learn speaking, which you feel, have been brought about by the implementation of?

- a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
- b. b. National Testing of Speaking?

Are these changes as intended by the Policy makers? If not, what might be the reasons for the unintended changes?

10. Could you please explain what the Master Trainers/ In-Service Advisors have got to say about the changes that they had observed in the teachers' classroom practices, which you feel, have been brought about by the implementation of?

- a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
- b. b. National Testing of Speaking?

(Comment on changes in the medium of instruction, pair/ group work activities, use of teaching aids and any supplementary materials, past exam papers, method of teaching, students involvement in the speaking activities)

Are these changes as intended by the Policy makers? If not, what might be the reasons for the unintended changes?

11. Could you please explain what the Master Trainers/ In-Service Advisors have got to say about the changes that they had observed in the students' classroom practices, which you feel, have been brought about by the implementation of?

- a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
- b. b. National Testing of Speaking?

12. What are the main intended changes to be achieved in teaching and learning of English in the context of the ELSP?

- a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
- b. National Test of Speaking?

13. What is your opinion of the main intended changes of the policy makers in teaching and learning activities in the context of the new ELSP?

(Comment on the impact of School Based Assessment of Speaking and National Test of Speaking on teaching and learning activities)

Can you give examples of this?

14. What effects does the postponement of NTS have on the teachers' and students' attitude and classroom behaviour to teach and learn speaking?

15. If you have any other comments that you would like to make please tell them.

Appendix 4

In Service Adviser (ISA)

Participant ID: (ISA/BC)

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Time started:

Time ended:

Introductory statement: Thank you for agreeing to talk to me, I am interested in finding out about your views on the intension of the introduction of National Testing of Speaking (NTS) and the School Based Assessment of Speaking (SBAS) and their effect on the teaching and learning activities and also your responsibilities within the context of English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP).

It usually takes about 45 minutes to answer.

I will not use your name in any reports and I will not let other people listen to the recording or tell anyone about your personal answers but your responses will be used only for the stated purposes of the study.

Thank you for answering the questions below.

1. What were the reasons behind the introduction of the ELSP?
2. Can you explain the teachers' attitude to teach speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
3. Can you explain the students' attitude to learn speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
4. Can you explain the teachers' classroom practices to teach speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
5. Can you explain of the students' classroom practices to learn speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
6. It has been decided to test speaking at two levels; SBA and NTS. Why is it at two levels?
7. What are your responsibilities in the context of the new English as a Life Skill Programme?

(Comment on your supervision of teaching learning activities in the classroom and reporting it to ADE)

How do you see your responsibilities in the context of the new ELSP?

(Comment on whether you are able to carry out your responsibilities, whether you are over-burdened, whether there are any hindrances in fulfilling your responsibilities)

8. What are the main intended changes to be achieved in teaching and learning of English in the context of the new ELSP?
 - a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
 - b. National Test of Speaking?

9. What is your opinion of the main intended changes of the policy makers in teaching and learning activities in the context of the new ELSP?

(Comment on the impact of School Based Assessment of Speaking and National Test of Speaking on teaching and learning activities)

Can you give examples of this?

10. What are the changes that you have observed in the teachers' attitude to teach speaking in the context of the new ELSP, which you feel, have been brought about by the implementation of?

a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?

b. National Test of Speaking?

(Comment on changes that you have observed in number of speaking activities covered in the English Pupils Textbook, English Workbook, and Teacher Guide: Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English, content of teaching, method of teaching, lesson planning)

Can you give examples of this?

(Compare the classes that you had visited before the implementation of the new ELSP and the normal classes (reading and writing) that you visit now with the speaking classes after the implementation of the new ELSP)

Which do you think that has more effect on the changes in the teachers' attitude? (SBA/NTS)

Are these changes as intended by the Policy makers? If no, what might be the reasons for the unintended changes or no changes at all?

Are these changes because of the decision to test speaking?

11. What are the changes that you have observed now in the students' attitude to learn speaking, which you feel, have been brought about by the implementation of?

a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?

b. National Test of Speaking?

Can you give examples of this?

Which do you think that has more effect on the changes in the students' attitude? (SBA, NTS)

Are these changes as intended by the policy-makers? If no, what might be the reasons for the unintended changes?

Are these changes because of the decision to test speaking?

12. What are the changes that you have observed in the teachers' classroom practices, which you feel, have been brought about by the implementation of?

a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?

b. National Test of Speaking?

(Comment on changes that you have observed in the medium of instruction, pair/ group work activities, use of teaching aids and any supplementary materials, method of teaching, students' involvement)

Can you give examples of this?

(Compare the classes that you had visited before the implementation of the new ELSP and the normal classes (reading and writing) that you visit now with the speaking classes since the introduction of the new ELSP)

Which do you think that has more effect on the changes in the teachers' classroom practices? (SBA, NTS)

Are these changes as intended by the Policy makers? If no, what might be the reasons for the unintended changes?

What are the reasons for the changes that you have observed in the speaking classes?

13. What are the changes that you have observed in the students' classroom practices, which you think, have been brought about by the implementation of?

- a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
- b. National Test of Speaking?

Can you give examples of this?

(Comment on changes that you have observed in the pair/ group work activities, students' involvement in the speaking activities)

Which do you think that has more effect on the changes in the students' classroom practices?(SBA, NTS)

Are these changes as intended by the Policy makers? If no, what might be the reasons for the unintended changes?

What are the reasons for the changes that you have observed in the speaking classes?

14. What effects does the postponement of NTS have any effect on the teachers' and students' attitude and classroom practices in teaching and learning speaking?

15. If you have any other comments that you would like to make please tell them.

Appendix 5

Master Trainer

Participant ID: (MT/BC)

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Time started:

Time ended:

Introductory statement: Thank you for agreeing to talk to me, I am interested in finding out about your views on the intension of the introduction of National Testing of Speaking (NTS) and the School Based Assessment of Speaking (SBAS) and their effect on the teaching and learning activities and also your responsibilities within the context of English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP).

It usually takes about 45 minutes to answer.

I will not use your name in any reports and I will not let other people listen to the recording or tell anyone about your personal answers but your responses will be used only for the stated purposes of the study.

Thank you for answering the questions below.

1. What were the reasons behind the introduction of ELSP?
2. Can you explain the teachers' attitude to teach speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
3. Can you explain the students' attitude to learn speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
4. Can you explain the teachers' classroom practices to teach speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
5. Can you explain of the students' classroom practices to learn speaking before the introduction of testing speaking within the ELSP?
6. Now, it has been decided to test speaking within the ELSP. What are the reasons that speaking is being tested? It is tested at two levels; SBA and NTS. Why is it at two levels?
7. What are your responsibilities in the context of the new English as a Life Skill Programme?

(Comment on the 80hr special teachers training on speaking course, material preparation (Teacher Guide: curriculum and training material for teaching speaking English, Teacher Guide: Resource material for teaching speaking English) - lesson and activities for teaching and assessment, monitoring the teaching and learning speaking activities in the classroom and reporting your duties to the Assistant Director of English- ADE) and any other

How do you see your responsibilities in the context of the new ELSP?

(Comment on whether you are able to carry out your responsibilities, whether you are over-burdened, whether there are any hindrances in fulfilling your responsibilities)

8. What are the main intended changes to be achieved in teaching and learning of English in the context of -ELSP?

- a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
- b. National Test of Speaking?

9. What is your opinion of the main intended changes of the policy makers in teaching and learning activities in the context of new ELSP?

(Comment on the impact of School Based Assessment of Speaking and National Test of Speaking on teaching and learning activities)

Can you give examples of these?

10. What are the changes that you have observed now, in the teachers' attitude to teach speaking, which you think, have been brought about by the implementation of?

- a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
- b. National Test of Speaking?

Can you give examples of these?

(Comment on changes that you have observed in number of speaking activities covered in the English Pupils Textbook, English Workbook, and Teacher Guide: Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English, content of teaching, method of teaching, lesson planning)

Which do you think that has more effect on the changes in the teachers' attitude? (SBA, NTS)

Are these changes as intended by the Policy makers? If no, what might be the reasons for the unintended changes or no changes at all?

Are these changes because of the decision to test speaking?

11. What are the changes that you have observed now in the students' attitude to learn speaking, which you feel, have been brought about by the implementation of?

- a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
- b. National Test of Speaking?

Can you give examples of these?

Which do you think that has more effect on the changes in the students' attitude? (SBA, NTS)

Are these changes as intended by the Policy makers? If no, what might be the reasons for the unintended changes?

Are these changes because of the decision to test speaking?

12. What are the changes that you have observed in the teachers' classroom practices, which you feel, have been brought about by the implementation of?

- a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
- b. National Test of Speaking?

Can you give examples of these?

(Comment on changes that you have observed in the medium of instruction, pair/ group work activities, use of teaching aids and any supplementary materials, method of teaching, involvement of the students in the speaking activities)

Which do you think that has more effect on the changes in the teachers' classroom practices; SBA, NTS or both have the same effect?

Are these changes as intended by the Policy makers? If no, what might be the reasons for the unintended changes?

Are these changes because of the decision to test speaking?

13. What are the changes that you have observed in the students' classroom practices, which you feel, have been brought about by the implementation of?

- a. School Based Assessment of Speaking?
- b. National Test of Speaking?

Can you give examples of these?

(Comment on changes that you have observed in the pair/ group work activities, students' involvement in the speaking activities)

Which do you think that has more effect on the changes in the students' classroom behaviour; SBA, NTS or both have the same effect?

Are these changes as intended by the Policy makers? If no, what might be the reasons for the unintended changes?

Are these changes because of the decision to test speaking?

14. Does the postponement of NTS have any effect on the teachers' and students' attitude and classroom behaviour to teach and learn speaking?

15. If you have any other comments that you would like to make please tell them.

Appendix 6**Teacher Questionnaire****School ID No:****Teacher ID No:**

In this questionnaire, I am interested in finding out about your views on the influence of the National Test of Speaking and the School Based Assessment of Speaking within the English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP) on your teaching and assessment activities in your English classes.

The questions usually take about 20 minutes to answer.

I will not use your name in any reports and I will not tell anyone about your personal answers but your responses will be used only for the stated purposes of the study.

You may feel upon completing this questionnaire that there are important aspects of the ELSP have not been covered or emphasised and there are questions do not have the appropriate responses to be selected from. Should this be the case, please indicate this at the end of the questionnaire.

Thank you for answering the questions below.

(Please write or tick the appropriate answer or answers)

Q1. Your gender:

Female ☐ Male ☐

Q2. Your age group:

Under 25 ☐ 25-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56 or over ☐

Q3. Number of years you have been in school teaching:

1-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ more than 10 years ☐

Q4. Your highest academic qualifications:

O level ☐ A level ☐ Bachelor's degree ☐

Master's degree ☐

Others ☐

(Please specify the level of your other qualification):

Q5. Your professional qualifications:

(Tick all that apply):

Teachers' Training Certificate ☐ Diploma-College of Education ☐

Post Graduate Diploma in Education ☐ Others ☐

(Please specify the other professional qualifications):

Q6. How far do you approve of the following developments within the ELSP?

(Tick one according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly approve	Approve	Undecided	Disapprove	Strongly disapprove
A. The emphasis is on learning speaking in the ELSP.					
B. The emphasis is on the National Test of Speaking in the GCE O/Level.					
C. The emphasis is on the School Based Assessment of Speaking in the GCE O/ Level.					
D. Please list the main reasons for your answer to Q6 – A,B and C:					

A:
.....

B:
.....

C:
.....

Q7. How far do you agree with the following statements about changes you have noticed since the introduction of the ELSP?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. I focus more on teaching speaking than before.					
B. My students focus more on learning speaking than before.					
C. I use more of the speaking activities in the Year 11 (GCE O/L) - English Pupil's Book than before.					
D. I use more of the speaking activities in the Year 11- English Pupil's Workbook than before.					
E. I use more of the speaking activities in the Teacher Guide: Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English.					
F. I have changed my methods of teaching speaking (how I teach).					
G. I focus more on teaching speaking for the GCE O/Level than before.					
H. I base my teaching mainly on the activities which are going to be tested in the National Speaking Test.					
I. I base my teaching mainly on the activities which are being tested in the School Based Assessment.					
J. Students' speaking skills are better compared with than before.					
K. Students enjoy speaking activities more than before.					
L. What do you think are the most important changes (A-K) and what are the main reasons for them?					

Q8. Please grade each of these statements about the "80hr Teacher Training on Speaking English" course offered by the Ministry of Education on teaching speaking skills within the ELSP.

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. The training has helped me to improve my ability to teach speaking skills					
B. The training has helped me to improve my ability to assess speaking skills					
C. I use the ideas from the training to teach speaking in my classes					

D. I use the ideas from the training to set practice tasks for School Based Assessment of Speaking					
E. I use the ideas from the training to set practice tasks for National Test of Speaking					
F. Please add any comments you would like to add to your answer to Q8:					

Q9. Please grade each of these statements about the “English as a Life Skill” programme that has been telecast on the National Rupavahini Television on Saturdays at 7pm.

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. The programme has helped me to improve my ability to teach speaking skills					
B. I use the ideas from the programme to teach speaking in my classes					
C. I use the ideas from the programme to set practice tasks for School Based Assessment of Speaking					
D. I use the ideas from the programme to set practice tasks for National Test of Speaking					
E. Please add any comments you would like to add to your answer to Q9:					

Q10. Think of the units you taught in your English classes in the first and second term of 2013. How many speaking activities did you use?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	All: 100%	Most : 75%	Half: 50%	A few: 25%	None: 0%
A. In the Year 11- English Pupil's Book					
B. In the Year 11- English Pupil's Workbook					
C. In the Teacher Guide- Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English					
D. Did you use any other speaking activities?					
E. What were they?					
F. Where did you choose them from?					
G. Why did you choose them?					

Q11. How much were your choices of speaking activity within the ELSP in your classes influenced by the following factors?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. Teacher Guide: Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English					
B. Teaching syllabus					
C. English Pupil's Book					
D. English Pupil's Workbook					
E. The National Test of Speaking					
F. The Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking					
G. Lack of teaching learning aids					
H. Lack of classroom facilities					
I. Professional training					
J. Students' current English level					
K. The assistance of In-Service Adviser					
L. The assistance of Master Trainer					
M. The assistance from school principal					
<p>N. Which of the points (A-M) listed in Q11, was the main influence on your choices of speaking activities?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>O. Why? Please specify your reasons for your answer to Q11- N:</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>					

Q12. How satisfied are you with the following factors involved in the teaching of speaking within the ELSP?

(Tick each according to the 5-point scale)

	Fully satisfied	Satisfied	Undecided	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
A. Teaching learning aids					
B. Classroom facilities					
C. Speaking activities in the English Pupil's Workbook					
D. Speaking activities in the English Pupil's Book					
E. Speaking activities in the Teacher Guide- Resource material for teaching spoken English					
F. Assistance from Master Trainer					
G. Assistance from In-service Adviser					
H. Assistance from school principal					

I. Students' attitude to learn speaking					
J. Students' current English level					
K. Why? Please specify your reasons for your answer to Q12 :					
.....					
.....					

Q13. How far do you agree with the following statements about teaching and learning speaking skills within the ELSP?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. The National Test of Speaking has made me focus more on teaching speaking skills.					
B. The School Based Assessment of Speaking has made me focus more on teaching speaking skills.					
C. Teaching speaking in the classroom has made students focus more on learning speaking skills.					
D. The National Test of Speaking makes students focus more on learning speaking.					
E. The Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking makes students focus more on learning speaking.					
F. The skills students learn in the speaking lessons in the classroom within the ELSP are useful to communicate in English with others outside the classroom					
G. Please add any comments you would like to add to your answer to Q13 :					
.....					
.....					

Q14. How much do the following factors influence your choice of **what** you teach- **the content of your lessons**- when teaching speaking skills within the ELSP?

(Tick each according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. Students' expectations					
B. Students' current English level					
C. Class size					

D. Available teaching learning resources in the classroom					
E. National Test of Speaking					
F. Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking					
G. Time that needs to be spent on lesson planning					
H. Time that needs to be spent on teaching and learning aids					
I. Others (please specify):					
J. Which factor (A-I) do you think is the most important influence on what you teach? Why? 					

Q15. How much do the following factors influence your choice of **how** you teach- **methods of teaching**- English speaking skills within the ELSP?

(Tick each according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. Students' expectations					
B. Students' current English level					
C. Class size					
D. Available teaching learning resources in the classroom					
E. National Testing of Speaking					
F. Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking within the ELSP					
G. Time that needs to be spent on lesson planning					
H. Time that needs to be spent on teaching and learning aids					
I. Others (please specify):					
J. Which factor (A-I) do you think is the most important influence on how you teach? Why? 					

Q16. How much do the following factors influence the **amount of time** you spend on teaching speaking English within the ELSP?

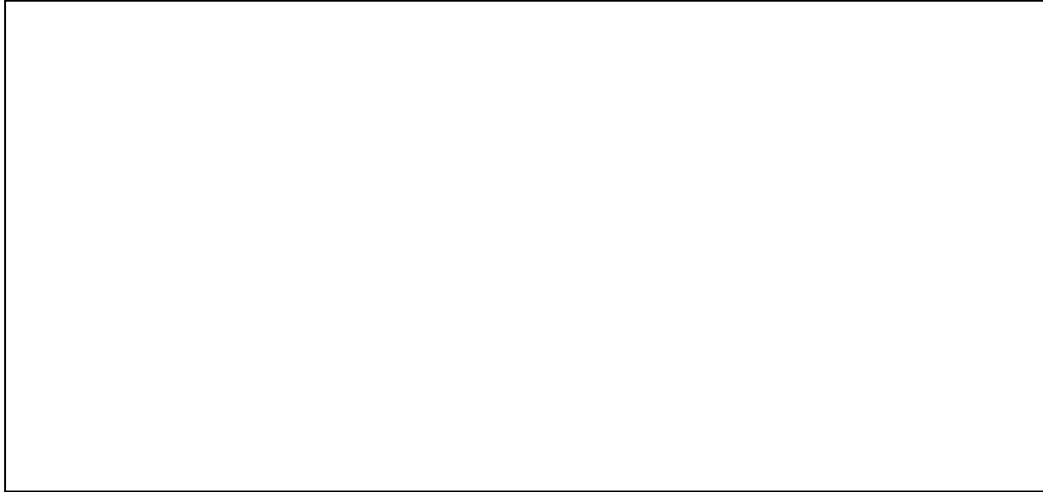
(Tick each according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. Students' expectations					
B. Students' current English level					
C. Class size					
D. Available teaching learning resources in the classroom					
E. National Test of Speaking					
F. Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking					
G. Time that needs to be spent on lesson planning					
H. Time that needs to be spent on teaching and learning aids					
I. Others (please specify):					
J. Which factor (A-I) do you think is the most important influence on the amount of time you spend on teaching speaking? Why?					

Q17. Has the **National Test of Speaking** within the ELSP caused any other changes to your attitude to teaching English or what and how you teach? Please explain your answer?

Q18. Has the **School Based Assessment of Speaking** within the ELSP caused any other changes to your attitude to teaching English or what and how you teach? Please explain your answer?

You may feel that there are important aspects of the ELSP have not been covered or emphasised and there are questions do not have the appropriate responses to be selected from in this questionnaire. Should this be the case, please indicate this here.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide additional comments or feedback if they feel the questionnaire does not fully address their needs or if they have suggestions for improvement.

That is the end of questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help and co-operation

Appendix 7

School ID No:

Student Questionnaire

In this questionnaire, I am interested in finding out about your views on the teaching and learning of English speaking and the Government decision about testing speaking at two levels- National Test of Speaking and School Based Assessment of Speaking- within the English as a Life Skill Programme. The questions usually take about 20 minutes to answer. I will not use your name in any reports and I will not tell anyone about your personal answers but your responses will be used only for the stated purposes of the study. Thank you for answering the questions below.

(Please write or tick the appropriate answer or answers)

Q1. What language does your teacher use to teach you speaking skills in your English classes?

(Tick one):

	✓
A. English only	
B. Mainly English with occasional Tamil	
C. Half English and Half Tamil	
D. Mainly Tamil	

Q2. What type of activities does your teacher use to teach you speaking skills in your English classes?

(Tick all that apply):

	✓
A. Dialogue	
B. Role plays	
C. Exchanging information	
D. Recitations	
E. Story telling	
F. Dramas	
F. Descriptions (picture)	
H. Oral presentations	
I. Speeches	
J. Interviews	
K. Debates	
L. Discussions	
M. Any other activities	
N. Please specify what the other activities are:	
O. Please specify which activities are used most often:	

Q3. What materials does your teacher use to teach you speaking skills in your English classes?

(Tick all that apply):

	√
A. English Pupil's Book	
B. English Pupil's Workbook	
C. Past exam question papers	
D. Audio recordings	
E. Video	
F. Pictures and cue cards	
G. Commercial publications	
H. Any other materials	
I. Please specify what the other materials are:	
J. Please specify which materials are used most often:	

Q4. Why are you learning speaking in your English classes?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. To get a better job					
B. To be able to go to university					
C. To go abroad for higher studies					
D. To go abroad to work					
E. To prepare for the National Test of Speaking					
F. To prepare for School Based Assessment of Speaking					
G. To acquire the competence to use English in the day to day activities					
H. To fulfil parents' expectations					
I. To have more and better opportunities in the future					
J. Which reason (A to I) is the most important for you?					
K. If there are any other reasons for your learning speaking, please mention them:					

Q5. Think about the “English as a Life Skill Programme” that has been telecast on the National Rupavahini Television on Saturdays at 7pm. How many episodes have you watched until July 2013?

(Tick one according to the 5-point scale):

1. All: 100% () 2. Most: 75% () 3. Half: 50% () 4. A few: 25% () 5. None: 0% ()

Q6. Do you agree that the competence you acquire from watching this “English as a Life Skill” programme will help you to:

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. Get a better job					
B. Go to university					
C. Go abroad for higher studies					
D. Go abroad to work					
E. Prepare for the National Test of Speaking					
F. Prepare for School Based Assessment of Speaking					
G. Use English in the day to day activities					
H. Fulfil parents’ expectations					
I. Have more and better opportunities in the future					
J. Which reason (A to I) is most important for you?					
K. If there are any other reasons for watching this programme, please mention them:					

Q7. How far do you agree with the following statements?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. I focus on learning speaking because it is tested at National Level					
B. I focus on learning speaking because it is tested at School Level					
C. Which do you think makes you focused more on speaking? (Tick one) 1. National Test of Speaking () 2. School Based Assessment of speaking () 3. I am undecided ()					
D. Please specify your major reason/s for your answer to Q7- C:					

Q8. How far do you agree with the following statements?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. I like that speaking is tested at National Level					
B. I like that speaking is tested at School Level					
C. Please specify your major reason/s for your answer to Q8:					

Q9. How far do you agree with the following statements about your teacher?

My teacher focuses on teaching speaking because;

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. Speaking is tested at National Level					
B. Speaking is tested at School Level					
C. Please specify if there are any other reasons for your teacher to focus on teaching speaking:					

Q10. How far do you agree with the following statements?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. The National Test of Speaking will help me to improve my speaking ability					
B. School Based Assessment of Speaking will help me to improve my speaking ability					
C. The skills I learn in the speaking lessons in the classroom within the ELSP are useful to communicate in English with others outside the classroom					
D. Please specify your major reason/s for your answer to Q10:					

Q11. Is there anything else about the **National Test of Speaking** that you would like to make please write them here?

Q12. Is there anything else about the **School Based Assessment of Speaking** that you would like to make please write them here?

That is the end of questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help. If you have any other comments you would like to make about **testing of speaking under ELSP**, please write them here.

That is the end of questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help and co-operation

Appendix 8

[illegible]

		Topic			
		National Testing of Speaking (NTS)	School Based Assessment of Speaking (SBA)	NTS &SBA	other
		23	24	25	26
Number of times mentioned (during the lesson)					
Different ways of preparing for the test					
Explaining test taking skills					
Practising past exam papers					
Exhortation(discourse intended to advice or encourage the students to do the test well)					
Any other comments	Positive				
	Negative				

Appendix 9

Lesson Plan

Grade: 11

Period of assessment: 3rd Term

Activity: Speaking

Focus: Speaking

Competency: Communicates clearly, fluently, and concisely

Competency level: Gives and asks for information appropriately

Objectives of the exemplar: Assess the ability to involve in conversation giving appropriate responses to questions.

Instructions to be given to the students:

- Be familiar with the task and the useful language expressions
- Give them words/ phrases and language expressions which they will need to build up their dialogues
- Students will be in groups
- Student will give information of herself while the other listens and fills the information
- Students Report the content of the filled information of a particular person

(Teacher must make the students familiar with the language expressions they need. Help them to familiarise questions and to give appropriate responses)

Appendix 10

Sample dialogue

Dialogue between a salesman and a customer

Salesman: Hello, Good morning!

Customer: Good morning! I am looking for a quality shirt.

Salesman: Oh yes! Come this way sir, I will show you some beautiful shirts. What is size you want?

Customer: Can I have 14 1/2 or 15?

Salesman: Here you are. These are the popular shirts and they are the best in the market today.

Customer: How much is this one?

Salesman: That's Rs: 1200/=

Customer: Oh! That is very expensive. Can't you give me a special discount?

Salesman: Well, that is the market price. I am sorry

Customer: Okay, I'll try something else.

Teacher

Divide the class into groups

Give them different situations to make a dialogue

Situation card:

- In a market
- In a food city
- In a book shop

Goes around the class to assist and assess them

At the end highlighted the mistakes generally. Write them on the board and do the error correction.

Appendix 11

Observers' note

Teacher (Tr.): Explained the task (writing dialogue) with the help of a “situation card” displayed on the blackboard (1)

Students (Sts.): Discussed for further information about the task (A)

Tr.: Explained language expression written on the blackboard (2)

Sts.: Copied down what the teacher had written on the board (B)

Tr.: Explained a model dialogue displayed on the board (3)

Sts.: Read out the dialogue (loud reading) (C)

Tr.: Divided the class into groups and provided a situation card to each group (4)

Sts.: Wrote a dialogue in their groups (D)

Sts.: Called the Tr. for assistance in their activities (E) (Tr. went around the class and helped in their activities on students' request)

Sts.: Presented the dialogue (pair work) (F)

Tr.: Frequent grammar errors highlighted on the blackboard (6)

Sts.: Noted down what the teacher had written on the board (G)

Class ended

Student engagement		Time/min	Lang uage used			Participant organisation								Content								Student modality					Materials				Topic of the lesson &types of activities	Notes/ comments	
						Class				Group		Indi.		Manage ment		Focus of instruction			Topic														
passive	active		L1	L2	L1&L2	T↔S/C	S/C↔T	S ↔ s/c	Choral	Same task (5/5-6)	Differ. Task	Same task	Differ. task	Procedure	Discipline	form	Function	Meaning	National Test of Speaking	School Based Assessment of Speaking	ELSP	other	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Other	Audio	video	Visual	Other		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
1		2	X	⊗		X								X									⊗	X	X					X			
	A	3	X	⊗			X									⊗	X	X					X	⊗									
2		4		X		X										⊗	X	X					⊗	X	X	X						X	
	B	2		X								X				X									X	⊗							
3		1		X		X											X	⊗					⊗	X	X		X						
	C	3		X								X				X	X	⊗					X		⊗	X							
4		3		x		X								X									⊗	X						X			
	D	5	X	⊗							X					X	X	⊗						X		⊗							
	E	2		⊗			X									⊗	X	X					X	⊗		X							
	F	9		X				X									X	⊗					X	⊗		X							
6		2		X		X										X							⊗	X							X		
	G	2		X									X			X									X	⊗							

Appendix 13

Lesson Plan

Grade: 11

Period of assessment: 3rd Term

Competency: Communicates clearly, fluently, and concisely

Competency level: Gives and asks for information appropriately

Nature of exemplar: Exchange information

Objectives of the exemplar: Assess ability to get information from a person and convey it to others

Instructions to be given to the students:

- Be familiar with the task and the useful language expressions
- Students will be in pairs
- In pairs, each student will give information of herself while the other listens and fills the information
- Reports the content of the filled information of that particular person (without telling her name) to the whole class so that others could guess who she is.

(Teacher must make the students familiar with the language expressions they need. Help them to make a sentence on appearance of the friend as it is a clue to guess the person.). E.g.

My friend

My friend is from Batticaloa. Her birthday is on 20th May. My friend has two plaited curly hair. She is fair. Her hobbies are..... Her mother is a housewife and father is a Bank officer. Etc., Can you guess who she is?

Information Card

1. Name:
2. Address:
3. Date of birth:
4. Hobbies:
5. Best friend:
6. Mother's occupation:
7. Father's occupation:
8. Favourite food:
9. Favourite game:
10. Ambition:

Appendix 14

Observers' note

Teacher (Tr.): Explained the activity (getting personal information from other and reporting it to class (oral work) (1)

Students (Sts.): Discussed about the activity (A)

Tr.: Explained about details such as vocabulary/ tense (to collect information about features on the information card- displayed on the blackboard) (2)

Sts.: Discussed more information needed for the activity on the card displayed (B)

Tr.: Wrote down language expressions (My friend is from/ She was born in/) (3)

Sts.: Copied down the language expressions (C)

Tr.: Divided the class (in pairs) (4)

Sts.: Gave out information to the partner and changed role (D)

Sts.: Reported information to the class and others to guess who she was (E)

Tr.: Stressed importance of this activity for speaking assessments (5)

Class ended

Student engagement		Time/min	Language used in classroom activities			Participant organisation								Content									Student modality					Materials				Topic of the lesson & type s of activities	Notes / comments
“passive” activities		“actively engaged” activities	L1	L2	L1&L2	T↔S/C	S/C↔T	S↔S/C	Choral	Same task (14/2)	Differ. Task	Same task	Differ. task	Procedure	Discipline	form	Function	Meaning	National Test of Speaking (NTS)	School Based Assessment of Speaking (SBA)	NTS &SBA	other	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Other	Audio	video	Visual	Other	33	34
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
1		1		x		x								x									⊗	x									
	A	1	x				x									x	x	⊗					x	⊗									
2		1		x		x										⊗	x	x					⊗	x	x	x	x			x			
	B	3		x	⊗		x									⊗	x	x					x	⊗	⊗								
3		1		x		x										⊗	x	x						x	⊗	⊗	x	x			x		
	C	4		x								x				x								x	x	⊗							
4		1		x		x								x									⊗	x									
	D	12		x	⊗					x						x		⊗					x	⊗		⊗							
	E	13		x				x								x	x	⊗					x	⊗	x								
5		1		x		x													x	x	⊗		⊗	x								x	

Appendix 15

Teacher ID: BCO/NS/CC /X

Date: 06.09.2013

Visit: 1

33: Get information from others and report it to the class

34: There were 14 pairs- 28 students in total (14/2)

- * D- while activities were on Tr. Moved around the class
- * E- only some students came forward to present their written work
- * Ph. stands for 'phrases'
- * The lesson lasted for 38 minutes

Appendix 16

Cover Page for classroom observation

Date and visit number:	
Time (lesson minute):	
School Year:	
Number of students on roll:	
Number of students present:	
School identification code:	
Teacher identification code:	

Questions for follow up interviews and comments

Aim and objectives of the lesson:	
Whether Objectives Achieved:	
What the lesson plan is based on:	
What the content of this lesson (what you teach) is based on:	
Whether the content of teaching is influenced by the test (SBA/NTS):	
What your method of your teaching (how you teach) is based on:	
Whether your method of teaching is influenced by the test (SBA/NTS):	
Materials used:	
Teacher's comments:	
Observer's comments:	

Appendix 17

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTER – Interviewer

ADE – Interviewee

INTER.:- Good morning sir!

ADE:- Good morning!

Inter.:- Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. Let me ask my first question. Can you explain what were the reasons behind the introduction of English as a life skill programme?

ADE:- Now you see, in our testing system, only the writing and reading parts are tested. And due to this reason, most of our teachers and students neglect the most important skill of language, speaking. So knowing the importance of speaking, the government, especially the Honourable President Mahinda Rajapaksha thought of it and he initiated this programme with the intention of giving the speaking skill to our children. Because he expects our future generation should be with the skill of speaking in English. Now, English has become as a life skill similar to that of the vocational skills such as masonry and carpentry. English skills, especially fluency in speaking is very important in the local and foreign job market. Therefore, the government implemented a project called ELSP aiming to give more emphasis on speaking.

Inter.:- My second question sir, can you explain the teachers' attitude to teach speaking before the introduction of ELSP?

ADE: - Yes, before introduction of this ELSP, most of our teachers' main objective was the GCE O Level. In the O/L exam and even in the A/L exam only the reading and writing skills are tested. So their whole work was based on that. They didn't pay much attention to teaching speaking skills. So the students also neglected the speaking activities.

Inter.:- You said that the students also neglected speaking. And my next question is that what was the students' attitude on learning speaking before the introduction of the ELSP?

ADE:- I will not say that they were not interested. But they were not properly exposed to speak the language, because the teachers' attitude was not in favour of training them in speaking. The main reason that teachers did not focus speaking was it was not tested. Even our teachers were also not very competent in teaching speaking. Because they also had the English education in the same way that is only focused on reading and writing when they were students themselves, speaking was not a focus of them. So they were very weak in speaking.

Inter.:- So you mean that since speaking was not tested before the ELSP, the teachers were not interested in teaching speaking and also the teachers were not competent enough to teach speaking.

ADE:- Yes sure, sure.

Inter.:- My next question sir, can you explain about the teachers' classroom activities in the English classes before the ELSP?

ADE:- They thought that if they teach reading and writing skills, that is enough. They thought that their main purpose of teaching was to make their children pass the public exam. Not giving the students sufficient skills within the English language and they, I can say, totally neglected speaking skills, but only concentrated on reading and writing for assessment purposes.

Inter.:- You mean to say that speaking was not focused because speaking was not tested.

ADE: - Definitely.

Inter.:- What was the students' classroom behaviour in the speaking classes before the introduction of the ELSP?

ADE:- Actually the situation of our students was very pathetic. Even during the classroom activities our children were not given opportunity to speak the language by the teachers. Even the teachers were not interested in the speaking activities. I can't blame the teachers also, because the environment was such. It is before the introduction of the programme.

Inter.:- And now it has been decided to test the speaking within the ELSP. Can you tell me, what are the reasons that the decision to test speaking was taken?

ADE:- When something is tested only, others will run after it. When importance is given to speaking skills by the government, then only teachers want to focus more on speaking. Because the government has introduced this system to give, and to develop the speaking skill among our children hoping our future generation will be able to speak the language and if testing is not introduced, our teachers will follow the same routine focusing only on tested items. There won't be any change in them. And if the speaking is tested, and if a valuable certificate is given to them, our teachers and students will be interested in this. So for that reason, testing is important.

Inter.:- It has been decided to test speaking at two levels. One is the School Based assessment and the other is the National Testing of speaking. Why is at two levels?

ADE:- In school level, it will be tested as a SBA system, so through SBA system, the teachers will be able to understand the ability level of the students' speaking. The weakness and the strength. So according to that they can train their children. For that purpose SBA is important. In the National level testing, we can see whether the students have achieved the national target. That is to use English in communication. It can be speaking and writing.

Inter.:- My next question, what are your responsibilities in the context of the ELSP?

ADE:- We attended workshops before the introduction of ELSP. We were explained about the objectives of the ELSP, how it is going to be implemented, and our duties as the Assistant Directors of Education. We also attended the seminars at National Institute of Education and even in provincial level, for more information about the SBA and the NTS. How they are going to be conducted and what is expected from teachers and students. Then, we conducted

seminars for our teachers introducing this new programme at zonal level. And when I visit to schools I check whether the programme is implemented as intended and I encourage the teachers, I encourage the students also telling them the importance of speaking and they are going to enjoy speaking in English in their future.

Inter.:- And are you able to carry out your responsibilities, without any hindrance or overburdens?

ADE:- Yes, but really I can't say it is 100% that I am doing my duty without any difficulties. Because you know our teachers when something new is introduced, most of our teachers are reluctant to adapt to them. They come out with so many things: work load, lack of training, students' poor standard of English. Most of the teachers' attitude is such. But now they feel that the government has taken this testing system very seriously and now they are being alert. And under this programme speaking is going to be tested and now the teachers' attitude has changed compared to the past as far as teaching and learning of speaking activities are concerned. Now, the teachers have started to teach speaking. But, still we have difficulties making changes in the attitude of the teachers. It will take some time I think.

Inter.:- So what are the challenges that you come across in implementing this programme in the classroom level?

ADE: - Challenges means, as I told you earlier, the teachers themselves are not good at speaking. They don't have the proper environment in the classroom to teach speaking. There are a large number of students in a classroom with different ability in English. A few of them are good and some are very weak. This kind of situation has been prevailing in the system for a very long time. So all of a sudden when we ask the teachers to teach and assess speaking and to make the students to speak, actually the teachers struggle. For that, to overcome the problem we have to do something. There are no Master Trainers in this zone and the ISA is looking after the duties of the Master Trainer. At the start, he felt that he was overloaded with duties because teachers and students were not well aware of the changes. But now, he does not complain about the extra responsibilities given to him. It may be because the teachers and students are slowly getting used to the change. I am not over optimistic that shortage of resource persons does not affect the new change

Inter.:- Now, the teachers have been trained to teach speaking. So you mean to say still some of the teachers are not competent enough to teach speaking?

ADE:- No, No... This is a very good point. Teacher training means, we had a 10 day long programme. It was like a work shop. So during the 10 day programme, we do not say that we were able to give a very good change in teachers' attitude and skills in teaching and assessing speaking. The 10 day programme is not enough. The teachers should initiate speaking themselves. They should start speaking with other teachers and students. Then only they will be competent. So by conducting short seminars like this, you can't expect a great change in them.

Inter.:- Can you explain what the Master Trainers and ISAs have got to say about the changes they have observed in the teachers' attitude to teaching speaking under the ELSP?

ADE:- We don't have master trainers here in our zone, the ISAs are there. They are looking after the duties of the Master Trainers. They say whenever they visit schools, now there is a remarkable, observable change in handling the speaking lessons. Now our teachers started teaching speaking because they know speaking is going to be tested. So, if they fail to do so our students will fail in the exams and even the students know that they are going to have a speaking test and even the parents know. So our teachers can't be idle. They should work hard and focus more on speaking.

Inter.:- And you said that ISAs say that they are able to see some observable changes in teachers' attitude and classroom practices in the speaking classes. Can you explain it further? What are these changes?

ADE:- Yes, you see, before the introduction of this scheme, we had our zonal level English Day competitions, in our zone, at the beginning, three years back, that is before the implementation of ELSP in 2011, for drama competition, there were only one or two dramas. Last year, we had nearly 10 dramas. This is also a direct impact of the introduction of this scheme. And nowadays in our schools the teachers are interested in having the English Literary Association programmes. We are invited to see their performance at the literary association programmes. We are able to observe those changes. The students are taking part in those activities like drama, debates, and oratory activities. We did not see these changes before the ELSP. The good thing is that now teachers are really working hard to motivate the students for the speaking test.

Inter.:-Do you think that these changes have been brought about by the implementation of the SBAs, and the National Testing of Speaking?

ADE:- Definitely, after the introduction of the ELSP, the teachers started to teach speaking and the students focus more on speaking activities in the English Pupil's Textbooks and Workbook. Now, they [teachers] allow the students to get involved more in the speaking activities in the forty minute lesson. We encourage all the teachers to start their English Literary Associations in their schools. And we strongly inform them that it is a must to have an English Literary Association programme at least once in a term. Due to that our students have been able to bring out their talent in speaking by partaking in dramas and speeches. And another thing is in some schools, the morning assembly is conducted in English. There is a very remote place called "Mandur", last time when I visited to a school in that place with a zonal level team, it was a wonder for all us, the morning assembly was totally conducted by school students in English. I can say that these changes are as a result of the decision to test speaking under the ELSP.

Inter.:- Can you explain me, which test, the SBA or the NTS has more effect on these changes?

ADE:- Yes, the first question can be answered now because we have already started the SBAs, now it has already been implemented, our teachers are working with that. After the implementation of SBA of speaking; now more work is given to the students and now the students have started speaking. And I can't say about the national level test because up to now our students have not faced the exam. Anyway, through this SBA scheme students will be able to handle the national test; they will face the NTS very effectively and easily through practicing SBAs.

Inter.:- So, do you mean that these changes are mainly because of this school based assessments?

ADE:- Yes of course. At the moment, SBA influences teachers and students in their teaching and learning of speaking activities.

Inter.:- Can you tell me are these changes as intended by the policy makers?

ADE:- The policy makers' main intention was to make the students to use the language that is to speak the language. They said, when this system was introduced, their concern was in speaking. Their total concern was to make the students equipped with the skill of speaking when they leave school. Like other skills – driving a car – that we learn in our life. So their expectation and intention was that. That is becoming true now.

Inter.:- So whatever changes you have observed as intended by the policy makers?

ADE:- Yes but not all the changes in teachers. Sometimes, I feel that teachers are more exam oriented. They do focus more on exam related speaking activities as they do in reading and writing activities.

Inter.:- My next question is, can you explain what the master trainers and the ISAs got to say about the changes that they have observed in the students' attitude to learn speaking?

ADE:- As I told you about the morning assemblies handling by the students , and more numbers of English Literary Association programmes being conducted and even the school principals are also aware of this ELSP and they are also cooperating with us in the implementation of this programme and the students are very much interested and it is a fact that the students are more interested in speaking rather than in reading and writing.

Inter.:- Can you tell me please, what are the main intended changes to be achieved in teaching and learning of English in the context of ELSP?

ADE:- Through this programme as I told you earlier, if there is a test only our students will get prepared themselves to face the exam otherwise they won't. After the introduction of this programme, now they know they are going to be tested in speaking. So now they have started to prepare for that. Because otherwise they think they will lose some marks. They don't know the exact marks. It has not been informed. We encourage them like in dance or music; you are going to have a practical test. You will get a very good number of marks and getting a good pass in GCE O level English will depend on the performance in speaking. So now the students have some sort of confidence in passing the exam in future as they do SBA as a practice for national test in the future.

Inter.:- Do you mean that the SBAs is to help the students to prepare themselves for the NTS?

ADE:- In SBAs, the teachers give some speaking activities for the students and that's an experience for them. So whenever it is tested we say that the national level test also will be like this, you no need to worry about that it will be very simple. Then they get the confidence.

Inter.:- What is your opinion of the main intended changes of the policy makers within the ELSP?

ADE:- Really they started this programme with a very good intention. It's on the national basis. I really appreciate this scheme of English as a life skill programme. Really, I have to thank the President, I am not bothered about other political matters, but academic wise the entire nation should be grateful to him. Because before the ELSP, most of our teachers and most of the members of our society thought that English should be spoken in such a way and by a specific group of people. But now testing speaking opened up the way for all the students to focus on speaking as well the teachers.

Inter.:- Earlier it was decided to have the national testing of speaking in 2011, and then it was in 2013, now it's decided to have in 2015. Does this continual postponement of national test have any effect on the teachers' and students' attitude and the behaviour in the classroom to teach and learn speaking?

ADE:- At the beginning we informed our teachers that they are going to introduce speaking tests for O/L students but we didn't say when they are going to start. Any way you prepare your students to face the exam. And it was postponed because there was an opposition to test speaking at national wise from some teachers and students. Because they said the time is not enough for preparing for the national test. So, most of them requested the ministry to postpone this and to conduct the national test later. No one asked to drop-out this. All said it's a good programme, but we need some time to prepare the students and to bring the environment favourable for speaking. Now most of our schools are ready to face that and now we are going to say it is definitely going to be implemented in 2015 and if you are not ready and prepared, you are going to lose. So the postponement is also a need. That was necessary. Because when something is newly introduced, the participants should be given some time to get themselves prepared for that and also the Ministry of Education needs more time to prepare the man power for conducting speaking for large number of students in national wide.

Inter.:- Does the postponement of NTS have any effect on the teachers' and students' attitude and classroom behaviour to teach and learn speaking in English?

ADE:- I said that the postponement was unavoidable for the reasons mentioned before but continual postponement may make teachers and students doubtful whether speaking will be tested or not. It may make them to focus more on other skills, which are tested, as they did in the past. So, officials should conduct the national test of speaking as early as possible.

Inter.:- My last question is, do you have any other comments that you would like to make about the SBA, and NTS within the ELSP?

ADE:- Really! I have 30 years of experience in teaching . So as a senior teacher and ADE for English, I feel that it is the best programme to train our children even the teachers to give them a very good speaking skill because I feel learners of any language should be able to speak the language otherwise there won't be any use. This programme should be implemented very effectively; at least at the end of the course – the O/Ls or A/Ls – our students will be able to use the language which will be very helpful in finding employments, and in their higher studies. You know sometimes in the society I see the sales representatives, I know many of them don't have good academic qualifications but they are very good in speaking language. So with that knowledge, they are able to make a good amount of money. Sometimes they can be weak in reading and writing in English. So it is a very nice programme and our teachers

and officers and the principals all should cooperate with this for the benefit of our students. If we get together and implement this programme effectively in future, Sri Lanka will have a population, especially the young population, who will be able to speak English confidently and fluently. That will be a tool for them to raise themselves up in their career.

Inter,;- That is the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your valuable time and comments.

Appendix 18

School ID No:

Teacher Questionnaire

Teacher ID No:

In this questionnaire, I am interested in finding out about your views on the influence of the National Test of Speaking and the School Based Assessment of Speaking within the English as a Life Skill Programme (ELSP) on your teaching and assessment activities in your English classes.

The questions usually take about 20 minutes to answer.

I will not use your name in any reports and I will not tell anyone about your personal answers but your responses will be used only for the stated purposes of the study.

You may feel upon completing this questionnaire that there are important aspects of the ELSP have not been covered or emphasised and there are questions do not have the appropriate responses to be selected from. Should this be the case, please indicate this at the end of the questionnaire.

Thank you for answering the questions below.

(Please write or tick the appropriate answer or answers)

Q1. Your gender:

Female ☒ Male ☐

Q2. Your age group:

Under 25 ☐ 25-35 ☒ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56 or over ☐

Q3. Number of years you have been in school teaching:

1-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ more than 10 years ☒

Q4. Your highest academic qualifications:

O level ☐ A level ☒ Bachelor's degree ☐

Master's degree ☐

Others ☒

Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)

(Please specify the level of your other qualification):

Q5. Your professional qualifications:

(Tick all that apply):

Teachers' Training Certificate ☒ Diploma-College of Education ☐

Post Graduate Diploma in Education ☐ Others ☐

(Please specify the other professional qualifications):

Q6. How far do you approve of the following developments within the ELSP?

(Tick one according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly approve	Approve	Undecided	Disapprove	Strongly disapprove
A. The emphasis is on learning speaking in the ELSP.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. The emphasis is on the National Test of Speaking in the GCE O/Level.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. The emphasis is on the School Based Assessment of Speaking in the GCE O/ Level.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Please list the main reasons for your answer to Q6 – A,B and C:					
A: The ELSP motivates the teachers and students to focus more on speaking skills.					

B: Testing in national level may negatively influence students' overall grading in English.
C: SBA would help students to perform well in the national tests.

Q7. How far do you agree with the following statements about changes you have noticed since the introduction of the ELSP?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. I focus more on teaching speaking than before.		x			
B. My students focus more on learning speaking than before.		x			
C. I use more of the speaking activities in the Year 11 (GCE O/L) - English Pupil's Book than before.	x				
D. I use more of the speaking activities in the Year 11- English Pupil's Workbook than before.		x			
E. I use more of the speaking activities in the Teacher Guide: Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English.	x				
F. I have changed my methods of teaching speaking (how I teach).	x				
G. I focus more on teaching speaking for the GCE O/Level than before.		x			
H. I base my teaching mainly on the activities which are going to be tested in the National Speaking Test.		x			
I. I base my teaching mainly on the activities which are being tested in the School Based Assessment.		x			
J. Students' speaking skills are better compared with than before.	x				
K. Students enjoy speaking activities more than before.	x				
L. What do you think are the most important changes (A-K) and what are the main reasons for them?					
The Teacher Guide helps me a lot in planning my speaking activities. It has model lesson plans as well.					

Q8. Please grade each of these statements about the "80hr Teacher Training on Speaking English" course offered by the Ministry of Education on teaching speaking skills within the ELSP.

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. The training has helped me to improve my ability to teach speaking skills			x		
B. The training has helped me to improve my ability to assess speaking skills			x		
C. I use the ideas from the training to teach speaking in my classes			x		
D. I use the ideas from the training to set practice tasks for School Based Assessment of Speaking			x		
E. I use the ideas from the training to set practice tasks for National Test of Speaking				x	

F. Please add any comments you would like to add to your answer to Q8:
The duration of the teacher training should have been more.

Q9. Please grade each of these statements about the “English as a Life Skill” programme that has been telecast on the National Rupavahini Television on Saturdays at 7pm.

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. The programme has helped me to improve my ability to teach speaking skills		x			
B. I use the ideas from the programme to teach speaking in my classes		x			
C. I use the ideas from the programme to set practice tasks for School Based Assessment of Speaking		x			
D. I use the ideas from the programme to set practice tasks for National Test of Speaking			x		
E. Please add any comments you would like to add to your answer to Q9: Not all the ideas from the program are applicable to my students. They are very weak in English.					

Q10. Think of the units you taught in your English classes in the first and second term of 2013. How many speaking activities did you use?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	All: 100%	Most : 75%	Half: 50%	A few: 25%	None: 0%
A. In the Year 11- English Pupil's Book			x		
B. In the Year 11- English Pupil's Workbook			x		
C. In the Teacher Guide-Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English		x			
D. Did you use any other speaking activities? Yes E. What were they? Involve students in speech activities at the school morning assembly, inter class debates F. Where did you choose them from? Internet G. Why did you choose them? To provide more practice in speaking					

Q11. How much were your choices of speaking activity within the ELSP in your classes influenced by the following factors?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. Teacher Guide: Resource Material for Teaching Spoken English		x			

B. Teaching syllabus			X		
C. English Pupil's Book			X		
D. English Pupil's Workbook			X		
E. The National Test of Speaking				X	
F. The Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking			X		
G. Lack of teaching learning aids		X			
H. Lack of classroom facilities		X			
I. Professional training		X			
J. Students' current English level	X				
K. The assistance of In-Service Adviser		X			
L. The assistance of Master Trainer		X			
M. The assistance from school principal		X			
<p>N. Which of the points (A-M) listed in Q11, was the main influence on your choices of speaking activities? Students' current English level</p> <p>O. Why? Please specify your reasons for your answer to Q11- N: From lesson planning to designing assessments depend on the students' standard of English.</p>					

Q12. How satisfied are you with the following factors involved in the teaching of speaking within the ELSP?

(Tick each according to the 5-point scale)

	Fully satisfied	Satisfied	Undecided	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
A. Teaching learning aids		X			
B. Classroom facilities		X			
C. Speaking activities in the English Pupil's Workbook		X			
D. Speaking activities in the English Pupil's Book		X			
E. Speaking activities in the Teacher Guide- Resource material for teaching spoken English	X				
F. Assistance from Master Trainer		X			
G. Assistance from In-service Adviser		X			
H. Assistance from school principal		X			
I. Students' attitude to learn speaking		X			
J. Students' current English level				X	
<p>K. Why? Please specify your reasons for your answer to Q12: Even though, students are interested in learning speaking, their poor standard of English makes it hard to teach in the classroom.</p>					

Q13. How far do you agree with the following statements about teaching and learning speaking skills within the ELSP?

(Tick each statement according to the 5-point scale):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A. The National Test of Speaking has made me focus more on teaching speaking skills.			X		
B. The School Based Assessment of Speaking has made me focus more on teaching speaking skills.		X			
C. Teaching speaking in the classroom has made students focus more on learning speaking skills.		X			
D. The National Test of Speaking makes students focus more on learning speaking.			X		
E. The Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking makes students focus more on learning speaking.		X			
F. The skills students learn in the speaking lessons in the classroom within the ELSP are useful to communicate in English with others outside the classroom		X			
G. Please add any comments you would like to add to your answer to Q13 : So far, we have not been informed of the date of the NTS.					

Q14. How much do the following factors influence your choice of **what** you teach- **the content of your lessons**- when teaching speaking skills within the ELSP?

(Tick each according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. Students' expectations		X			
B. Students' current English level		X			
C. Class size		X			
D. Available teaching learning resources in the classroom			X		
E. National Test of Speaking				X	
F. Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking			X		
G. Time that needs to be spent on lesson planning		X			
H. Time that needs to be spent on teaching and learning aids		X			
I. Others (please specify): Students' speaking ability					
J. Which factor (A-I) do you think is the most important influence on what you teach? Students' expectations Why? Students focus on teaching activities only when they are interested in.					

Q15. How much do the following factors influence your choice of **how** you teach- **methods of teaching**- English speaking skills within the ELSP?
(Tick each according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. Students' expectations		x			
B. Students' current English level	x				
C. Class size	x				
D. Available teaching learning resources in the classroom	x				
E. National Testing of Speaking				x	
F. Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking within the ELSP			x		
G. Time that needs to be spent on lesson planning			x		
H. Time that needs to be spent on teaching and learning aids			x		
I. Others (please specify): Instructions in the Teacher Guide about how to conduct speaking lessons.					
J. Which factor (A-I) do you think is the most important influence on how you teach? Students' current English level Why? When students' are poor in English, I have to use more teacher centred teaching methods.					

Q16. How much do the following factors influence the **amount of time** you spend on teaching speaking English within the ELSP?
(Tick each according to the 5-point scale):

	Very much	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
A. Students' expectations		x			
B. Students' current English level		x			
C. Class size		x			
D. Available teaching learning resources in the classroom			x		
E. National Test of Speaking				x	
F. Classroom Based Assessment of Speaking			x		
G. Time that needs to be spent on lesson planning			x		
H. Time that needs to be spent on teaching and learning aids			x		
I. Others (please specify):					
J. Which factor (A-I) do you think is the most important influence on the amount of time you spend on teaching speaking? Students' expectations Why? Student factor is important to achieve the objectives of any lessons.					

Q17. Has the **National Test of Speaking** within the ELSP caused any other changes to your attitude to teaching English or what and how you teach? Please explain your answer?

I am undecided.

Q18. Has the **School Based Assessment of Speaking** within the ELSP caused any other changes to your attitude to teaching English or what and how you teach? Please explain your answer?

I try to find more speaking activities from different sources like internet. I also give more class time for students' involvement in the speaking activities.

You may feel that there are important aspects of the ELSP have not been covered or emphasised and there are questions do not have the appropriate responses to be selected from in this questionnaire. Should this be the case, please indicate this here.

I was not 100% sure about questions related to the NTS because I had no idea of the content, mode and date of its implementation.

That is the end of questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help and co-operation

Appendix 19

◆ **Activity : 2:06 - Speaking / Writing** (Work Book, p.15)

Complete the following dialogue which shows that Kataragama is a place of worship where people of all religions visit.

Geetha :- How was your trip to Kataragama ?

Nizar :- It was simply marvellous.

Geetha :- Why do you say so ?

Nizar :- The whole place looked enchanting under the night sky.

Geetha :-

Nizar :-

Geetha :-

Nizar :-

Geetha :-

Nizar :-

◆ **Activity : 7:03**

(Work Book p.66)

Look at this picture and mention five things that can be done to help this family to make better use of resources. You may use some ideas with these words: Steps, flowers, a lavatory, vegetable plots, cowshed etc.



Activity 2.27 Group work (Pupil's Book - Part I, p. 51)

■ Speaking

Have a class debate on the topic

Should we wear traditional clothes?

Should we wear 'modern' clothes?

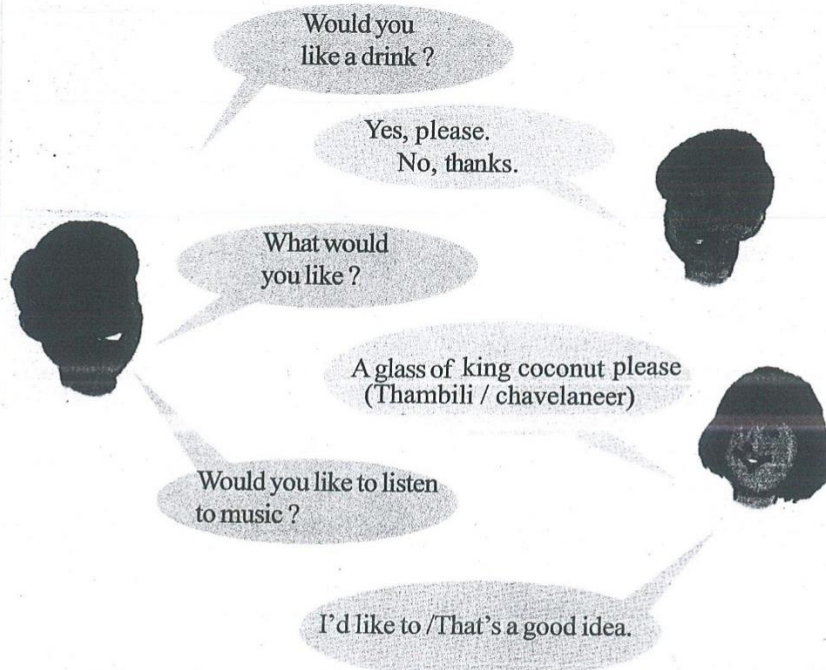
Activity 3.10

(Pupil's Book - Part I, p. 68)

■ Speaking

Read the expressions given below. Practise similar short conversations with the following clues.

- a sandwich / Helapa
- some vadai / boondi
- listen to music
- read a magazine
- some thambili
- a cup of tea
- a cup of coffee



Activity 6.10 Group activity (Pupil's Book Part II, p.9)

■ Writing / Speaking

Organize an inter – class debate on the topic “Modern means of communication to improve human Life”.

Activity 6.18 Pair work (Pupil's Book Part II, p.13)

■ Speaking

Find out information about the libraries you have in your area. There may be libraries at temples, kovils, churches, banks, other state / private institutions.

The following questions will help you to get the information.

- i Do you have a library / reading room ?
- ii Do you have books and newspapers there ?
- iii When is the library / reading room open for use ?
- iv Do you have a person-in-charge of the library / reading room ?
- v How old is your library / reading room ?
- vi Who are the regular users of the library ?
- vii How many books do you have in your stall ?
- viii What do you do with your old newspapers ?
- ix What are the most popular magazines ?

School Based Assessment

Grade:	11	(Teacher Guide, p. 274)
Tool :	5	
Period of Evaluation:	2 nd /3 rd Term	
Competency:	8 Communicates clearly, fluently and concisely	
Competency Level:	8.17 Distinguishes various language functions	
Nature of the Tool:	Holds English Literary Association with the participation of all the students at classroom level.	
Objective Of the Tool:	Assess ability to present items meaningfully and confidently	

Instructions for the implementation of the Assessment Tool:**a) Instructions for the teacher for preparation of the task:**

- At the beginning of the term , make the students aware of the assessment tool.
- Make them familiar with the language expressions which are useful e.g. How to address a gathering: Dear Principal Sir, Dear Teachers ,and My dear friends, I'm happy to have had this opportunity to sing a song etc.
- Help them to identify the useful language expressions to present their items.
- Instruct them to prepare to present different types of items and help them to practise.
- Organize English Literary Associations at classroom level.

b) Instructions to the student

- Be familiar with the task.
- Identify the useful language expressions to present their item.
- Practise and present the item on a given date.

Criteria for assessment

Essential Learning outcome:	Present the particular item meaningfully and accurately.
Desired Learning outcome:	Present the particular item meaningfully, accurately, with clear focus on the topic with facial expressions and gestures.

School Based Assessment*(Teacher Guide, p. 275)***Grade:** 11**Tool:** 6**Period of Assessment:** 2nd/3rd Term**Competency:** 8. Communicates clearly, fluently and concisely**Competency Level:** 8.18 Express ideas relevant to various fields using the appropriate jargon**Nature of the Tool:** Holds English Literary Association with the participation of all the students at classroom level. (Expresses ideas relevant to various fields using the appropriate jargon. E.g. welcome speech, vote of thanks, minutes, dramas etc.)**Objective of the Tool:** Assess ability to use appropriate language particular to the item meaningfully and confidently.**Instructions for the implementation of the Assessment Tool:****a) Instructions for the teacher for preparation of the task:**

- At the beginning of the term, make the students aware of the assessment tool.
- Make them familiar with the language expressions which are useful E.g. How to address a gathering: 'Dear Principal Sir, Dear Teachers, My dear friends, I'm happy to have had this opportunity to sing a song', words and phrases such as agenda, minutes, vote of thanks and such other language expressions. See examples given under Tool 01 Grade 11.
- Help them to identify the useful language expressions to present their items.
- Instruct them to prepare to present different types of items and help them to practise.
- Organize English Literary Associations at classroom level.

b) Instructions to be given to the students:

- Be familiar with the task.
- Identify the useful language expressions to present their item.
- Practise and present the item on a given date.

Criteria for assessment**Essential learning outcomes:**

Uses appropriate language particular to the item meaningfully, audibly and clearly.

Desired learning outcomes:

Uses appropriate language particular to the item meaningfully, audibly, clearly, correctly and fluently.